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**Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan
for
State/Territory Louisiana**

FFY 2025 – 2027

Version: Amendment 1

Plan Status: Approved as of 2025-03-26 17:28:41 GMT

This Plan describes the Child Care and Development Fund program to be administered by the State or Territory for the period from 10/01/2024 to 9/30/2027, as provided for in the applicable statutes and regulations. The Lead Agency has the flexibility to modify this program at any time, including amending the options selected or described.

For purposes of simplicity and clarity, the specific provisions of applicable laws printed herein are sometimes paraphrases of, or excerpts and incomplete quotations from, the full text. The Lead Agency acknowledges its responsibility to adhere to the applicable laws regardless of these modifications.

Table of Contents

Overview.....	4
1 CCDF Program Administration	6
1.1 CCDF Leadership.....	6
1.2 CCDF Policy Decision Authority	7
1.3 Consultation in the Development of the CCDF Plan.....	10
2 Child and Family Eligibility and Enrollment and Continuity of Care	12
2.1 Reducing Barriers to Family Enrollment and Redetermination.....	12
2.2 Eligible Children and Families.....	14
2.3 Prioritizing Services for Vulnerable Children and Families	23
2.4 Lead Agency Outreach to Families Experiencing Homelessness, Families with Limited English Proficiency, and Persons with Disabilities	25
2.5 Promoting Continuity of Care.....	26
3 Child Care Affordability	31
3.1 Family Co-payments	31
3.2 Calculation of Co-Payment	33
3.3 Waiving Family Co-payment.....	34
4 Parental Choice, Equal Access, Payment Rates, and Payment Practices	35
4.1 Access to Full Range of Provider Options	35
4.2 Assess Market Rates and Analyze the Cost of Child Care.....	36
4.3 Adequate Payment Rates	40
4.4 Payment Practices to Providers.....	44
4.5 Supply Building.....	46
5 Health and Safety of Child Care Settings.....	49
5.1 Licensing Requirements	50
5.2 Ratios, Group Size, and Qualifications for CCDF Providers	51
5.3 Health and Safety Standards for CCDF Providers	54
5.4 Pre-Service or Orientation Training on Health and Safety Standards	65
5.5 Monitoring and Enforcement of Licensing and Health and Safety Requirements	67
5.6 Ongoing Health and Safety Training.....	72
5.7 Comprehensive Background Checks	73
5.8 Exemptions for Relative Providers	84
6 Support for a Skilled, Qualified, and Compensated Child Care Workforce	84
6.1 Supporting the Child Care Workforce	84
6.2 Professional Development Framework	86
6.3 Ongoing Training and Professional Development	88
6.4 Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines.....	89
7 Quality Improvement Activities	90
7.1 Quality Activities Needs Assessment.....	91
7.2 Use of Quality Set-Aside Funds	91

8	Lead Agency Coordination and Partnerships to Support Service Delivery.....	93
8.1	Coordination with Partners to Expand Accessibility and Continuity of Care.....	93
8.2	Optional Use of Combined Funds, CCDF Matching, and Maintenance-of-Effort Funds.....	95
8.3	Coordination with Child Care Resource and Referral Systems.....	97
8.4	Public-Private Partnerships	98
8.5	Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan.....	99
9	Family Outreach and Consumer Education.....	100
9.1	Parental Complaint Process	100
9.2	Consumer Education Website	101
9.3	Increasing Engagement and Access to Information	106
9.4	Providing Information on Developmental Screenings.....	108
10	Program Integrity and Accountability	109
10.1	Effective Internal Controls.....	109
10.2	Fraud Investigation, Payment Recovery, and Sanctions	112
	Appendix 1: Lead Agency Implementation Plan	117
	Appendix 1: Form.....	118

Overview

Introduction

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) (42 U.S.C. 9857 *et seq.*), together with section 418 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 618), authorize the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), the primary federal funding source devoted to supporting families with low incomes afford child care and increasing the quality of child care for all children. The CCDF program is administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and provides resources to State, Territory, and Tribal governments via their designated CCDF Lead Agency.

CCDF plays a vital role in supporting family well-being and child development; facilitating parental employment, training, and education; improving the economic well-being of participating families; and promoting safe high-quality care and learning environments for children when out of their parents' care.

As required by CCDBG, this CCDF Plan serves as the State/Territory Lead Agency's application for a three-year cycle of CCDF funds and is the primary mechanism OCC uses to determine Lead Agency compliance with the requirements of the statute and regulations. CCDF Lead Agencies must comply with the rules set forth in CCDBG and corresponding ACF-issued rules and regulations. The CCDF Plan is a fundamental part of OCC's oversight of CCDF and is designed to align with and complement other oversight mechanisms including administrative and financial data reporting, the monitoring process, error rate reporting, audits, and the annual Quality Progress Report.

Organization of Plan

In their CCDF Plans, State/Territory Lead Agencies must describe how they implement the CCDF program. The Plan is organized into the following sections:

1. CCDF Program Administration
2. Child and Family Eligibility and Enrollment and Continuity of Care
3. Child Care Affordability
4. Parental Choice, Equal Access, Payment Rates, and Payment Practices
5. Health and Safety of Child Care Settings
6. Support for a Skilled, Qualified, and Compensated Child Care Workforce
7. Quality Improvement Activities
8. Lead Agency Coordination and Partnerships to Support Service Delivery
9. Family Outreach and Consumer Education
10. Program Integrity and Accountability

Completing the Plan

This revised Plan aims to capture the most accurate and up-to-date information about how a State/Territory is implementing its CCDF program in compliance with the requirements of CCDF. In responding to plan questions, Lead Agencies should provide concise and specific summaries and/or bullet points as appropriate to the question. Do not insert tables or charts, add attachments, or copy manuals into the Plan. A State/Territory's CCDF Plan is intended to stand on its own with sufficient information to describe how the Lead Agency is implementing its CCDF program without need for added attachments, tables, charts, or State manuals.

OCC recognizes that Lead Agencies use different mechanisms to establish CCDF policies, such as State statute, regulations, administrative rules, policy manuals, or policy issuances. Lead Agencies must submit their CCDF Plan no later than July 1, 2024.

Review and Amendment Process

OCC will review submitted CCDF Plans for completeness and compliance with federal policies. Each Lead Agency will receive a letter approximately 90 days after the Plan is due that includes all Plan non-compliances to be addressed. OCC recognizes that Lead Agencies continue to modify and adapt their programs to address evolving needs and priorities. Lead Agencies must submit amendments to their Plans as they make substantial policy and program changes during the three-year plan cycle, including when addressing non-compliances.

Appendix 1: Implementation Plan

As part of the Plan review process, if OCC identifies any CCDF requirements that are not fully implemented, OCC will communicate a preliminary notice of non-compliance for those requirements via an emailed letter. OCC has created a standardized template for Lead Agencies to submit as their 60-day response to that preliminary notice. This template is found at Appendix 1: Lead Agency Implementation Plan. This required response via the Appendix will help create a shared understanding between OCC and the Lead Agency on which elements of a requirement are unmet, how they are unmet, and the Lead Agency's steps and associated timelines needed to fully implement those unmet elements.

CCDF Plan Submission

CCDF Lead Agencies will submit their Plans electronically through the Child Care Automated Reporting System (CARS). CARS will include all language and questions included in the final CCDF Plan template approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Note that the format of the questions in CARS could be modified from the Word version of the document to ensure compliance with Section 508 policies regarding accessibility to electronic and information technology for individuals with disabilities.

1 CCDF Program Administration

Strong organizational structures, operational capacity, and partnerships position States and Territories to administer CCDF efficiently, effectively, and collaboratively.

This section identifies the CCDF Lead Agency, CCDF Lead Agency leadership, and the entities and individuals who will participate in the implementation of the program. It also identifies the partners who were consulted to develop the Plan.

1.1 CCDF Leadership

The governor of a State or Territory must designate an agency (which may be an appropriate collaborative agency) or establish a joint interagency office to represent the State or Territory as the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency agrees to administer the program in accordance with applicable federal laws and regulations and the provisions of this Plan, including the assurances and certifications.

1.1.1 Designated Lead Agency

Identify the Lead Agency or joint interagency office designated by the State or Territory. OCC will send official grant correspondence, such as grant awards, grant adjustments, Plan approvals, and disallowance notifications, to the designated contact identified here.

- a. Lead Agency or Joint Interagency Office Information:
 - i. Name of Lead Agency: **Louisiana Department of Education**
 - ii. Street Address: **1201 North Third St.**
 - iii. City: **Baton Rouge**
 - iv. State: **Louisiana**
 - v. ZIP Code: **70802**
 - vi. Web Address for Lead Agency: **louisianabelieves.com**
- b. Lead Agency or Joint Interagency Official contact information:
 - i. Lead Agency Official First Name: **Cade**
 - ii. Lead Agency Official Last Name: **Brumley**
 - iii. Title: **State Superintendent**
 - iv. Phone Number: **225-342-2602**
 - v. Email Address: **cade.brumley@la.gov**

1.1.2 CCDF Administrator

Identify the CCDF Administrator designated by the Lead Agency, the day-to-day contact, or the person with responsibility for administering the State's or Territory's CCDF program. The OCC will send programmatic communications, such as program announcements, program instructions, and data collection instructions, to the designated contact identified here. If there is more than one designated contact with equal or shared responsibility for administering the CCDF program, identify the Co-Administrator or the person with administrative responsibilities and include their contact information.

- a. CCDF Administrator contact information:
 - i. CCDF Administrator First Name: **Karen**

- ii. CCDF Administrator Last Name: **Powell**
- iii. Title of the CCDF Administrator: **Deputy Assistant Superintendent, Early Childhood Care and Education**
- iv. Phone Number: **225-342-3736**
- v. Email Address: **Karen.Powell@la.gov**
- b. CCDF Co-Administrator contact information (if applicable):
 - i. CCDF Co-Administrator First Name: **Mellynn**
 - ii. CCDF Co-Administrator Last Name: **Baker**
 - iii. Title of the CCDF Co-Administrator: **Assistant Superintendent, Early Childhood Care and Education**
 - iv. Phone Number: **225-469-8384**
 - v. Email Address: **Mellynn.Baker@la.gov**
 - vi. Description of the Role of the Co-Administrator: **The CCDF Administrator manages the day-to-day oversight of the CCDF program and serves as the liaison with the ACF-OCC team. The CCDF Administrator reports to the CCDF Co-Administrator, who serves as the lead for the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education at the Lead Agency and provides approval for Lead Agency CCDF activities.**

1.2 CCDF Policy Decision Authority

The Lead Agency has broad authority to administer (i.e., establish rules) and operate (i.e., implement activities) the CCDF program through other governmental, non-governmental, or public or private local agencies as long as the Lead Agency retains overall responsibility for the administration of the program. Administrative and implementation responsibilities undertaken by agencies other than the Lead Agency must be governed by written agreements that specify the mutual roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency and other agencies in meeting the program requirements.

1.2.1 Entity establishing CCDF program rules

Which of the following CCDF program rules and policies are administered (i.e., set or established) at the State or Territory level or local level? Identify whether CCDF program rules and policies are established by the State or Territory (even if operated locally) or whether the CCDF policies or rules are established by local entities, such as counties or workforce boards.

Check one of the following:

- a. ☒ All program rules and policies are set or established by the State or Territory. (If checked, skip to question 1.2.2.)
- b. ☐ Some or all program rules and policies are set or established by local entities or agencies. If checked, indicate which entities establish the following policies. Check all that apply:
 - i. Eligibility rules and policies (e.g., income limits) are set by the:
 - ☐ State or Territory.

- ☐ Local entity (e.g., counties, workforce boards, early learning coalitions).
- ☐ Other. Identify the entity and describe the policies the entity can set:
- ii. Sliding-fee scale is set by the:
 - ☐ State or Territory.
 - ☐ Local entity (e.g., counties, workforce boards, early learning coalitions).
 - ☐ Other. Identify the entity and describe the policies the entity can set:
- iii. Payment rates and payment policies are set by the:
 - ☐ State or Territory.
 - ☐ Local entity (e.g., counties, workforce boards, early learning coalitions).
 - ☐ Other. Identify the entity and describe the policies the entity can set:
- iv. Licensing standards and processes are set by the:
 - ☐ State or Territory.
 - ☐ Local entity (e.g., counties, workforce boards, early learning coalitions).
 - ☐ Other. Identify the entity and describe the policies the entity can set:
- v. Standards and monitoring processes for license-exempt providers are set by the:
 - ☐ State or Territory.
 - ☐ Local entity (e.g., counties, workforce boards, early learning coalitions).
 - ☐ Other. Identify the entity and describe the policies the entity can set:
- vi. Quality improvement activities, including QIS, are set by the:
 - ☐ State or Territory.
 - ☐ Local entity (e.g., counties, workforce boards, early learning coalitions).
 - ☐ Other. Identify the entity and describe the policies the entity can set:
- vii. Other. List and describe any other program rules and policies that are set at a level other than the State or Territory level:

1.2.2 Entities implementing CCDF services

The Lead Agency has broad authority to operate (i.e., implement activities) through other agencies, as long as it retains overall responsibility for CCDF. Complete the table below to identify which entity(ies) implements or performs CCDF services.

Check the box(es) to indicate which entity(ies) implement or perform CCDF services.

CCDF Activity	CCDF Lead Agency	TANF Agency	Local Government Agencies	CCR&R	Other
Who conducts eligibility determinations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe:

CCDF Activity	CCDF Lead Agency	TANF Agency	Local Government Agencies	CCR&R	Other
Who assists parents in locating child care (consumer education)?	[x]	[]	[x]	[x]	[] Describe:
Who issues payments?	[x]	[]	[]	[]	[] Describe:
Who monitors licensed providers?	[x]	[]	[]	[]	[] Describe:
Who monitors license-exempt providers?	[x]	[]	[]	[]	[] Describe:
Who operates the quality improvement activities?	[x]	[]	[x]	[x]	[] Describe:

1.2.3 Information systems availability

For any activities performed by agencies other than the Lead Agency as reported above in 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, identify the processes the Lead Agency uses to oversee and monitor CCDF administration and implementation activities to retain overall responsibility for the CCDF program.

Check and describe how the Lead Agency includes in its written agreements the required elements. Note: The contents of the written agreement may vary based on the role the agency is asked to assume or type of project but must include, at a minimum, the elements below.

a. Tasks to be performed.

[x] Yes. If yes, describe: **The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies are contracted by the Lead Agency to provide coaching and training supports to implement developmentally-appropriate practice in early learning centers and registered family child care homes. The CCR&Rs also maintain an early learning resource center that provides activities that engage and support families in finding care within the early learning community and increase connections, resources, and collaboration.**

In addition, written agreements with local-level early childhood Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLAs), many of whom are Local Government Agencies, are in the form of assurances that are signed by the CNLAs. These agreements include coordinating CLASS® observations, ensuring feedback is provided to all participating programs, maintaining compliance with shadow score requirements for all reliable observers, and submitting an annual Coordinated Observation plan for quality improvement, as part of the Lead Agency's statewide accountability system. Furthermore, the Lead Agency's local early childhood CNLAs work to ensure ease of access to early childhood programs and assist parents in locating child care by working to coordinate enrollment across publicly-funded programs.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- b. Schedule for completing tasks.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe: CCR&Rs are asked to provide monthly records that document the completion of required services related to differentiated coaching and technical assistance, training, and the early learning resource center. This documentation records the name of the early learning site served and includes information on the focus of the service provided.

Community Network Lead Agencies are required to submit an annual Coordinated Observation Plan for all local observations, local observation results as observations are made, a count of all publicly-funded birth-to-age-five children by site twice annually, an annual community-wide application for early childhood public funding, and an annual Coordinated Enrollment Plan for the community.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- c. Budget which itemizes categorical expenditures in accordance with CCDF requirements.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe: CCR&R budgets align with delivery of the defined services provided, including coaching, technical assistance, group training, an early learning resource center, and respite care as needed.

Community Network Lead Agencies utilize CCDF funds to support CLASS® observation costs, Coordinated Enrollment costs, and administrative costs to support the community network.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- d. Indicators or measures to assess performance of those agencies.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe: CCR&Rs are evaluated monthly based on their executed deliverables through the measure of success reports, which provides data from coaching caseloads and on-site observations. CCR&Rs develop data-driven plans that are tailored to the specific needs of sites, classroom- and/or child-level data or reports, and current Lead Agency initiatives. In addition, periodic on-site observations by the Lead Agency in conjunction with the CCR&R Master Coaches provides in-field understanding of changes in recipient practice to inform further high-quality professional learning and workforce development. The Lead Agency will assess performance of CCR&R agencies based on the CCR&Rs' executed deliverables in regard to the data-driven plans developed and based on metrics reflecting improvements observed in the sites and classrooms.

Community Network Lead Agencies, as well as the publicly-funded programs within the network, receive an annual Performance Profile rating, which is aligned to the QRIS and measures the quality of teacher-child interactions in every classroom, using CLASS® observations. These Performance Ratings are separated into five categories: ☐Unsatisfactory☐ (1.00-2.99), ☐Approaching Proficient☐ (3.00-4.49), ☐Proficient☐ (4.50-5.24), ☐High Proficient☐ (5.25-5.99) and ☐Excellent☐ (6.00-7.00). Sites rated ☐Excellent☐, ☐High Proficient☐, and ☐Proficient☐ are considered quality sites. The Department also provides networks with data sheets that show changes in site and network performance over multiple years.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- e. In addition to the written agreements identified above, describe any other monitoring and

auditing processes used to oversee CCDF administration. The CCR&Rs utilize a standardized tracking system that provides the Lead Agency with real-time data related to the date, time, classroom, and site where coaching and technical assistance is being provided as part of quality improvement activities. Data-driven decisions are made between the Lead Agency and the CCR&Rs to determine each year's successful implementation of high-priority coaching caseloads and coaching dosages to be used. In addition, a Lead Agency program monitor is assigned to CCR&Rs and service areas to monitor quality support interventions for the high-priority or active coaching sites. These interventions are determined based on the annual Performance Profile rating for each site. The active coaching sites include Site Improvement sites, sites with ☒ Approaching Proficient scores, ☐ and new sites and/or new teachers. In addition, periodic on-site observations by the Lead Agency in conjunction with the CCR&R Master Coaches provides the Lead Agency with understanding of changes in recipient practice to inform further high-quality professional learning and workforce development and to provide further guidance on expectations to CCR&Rs. The Lead Agency will also review CCR&R survey data on coaching, technical assistance, and training provided.

Each semester Lead Agency staff members ensure that CNLAs conduct CLASS® observations in all required classrooms, via monitoring of CLASS® data submitted by a Lead Agency-operated portal. Failure to conduct a CLASS® observation in any observation period results in the CNLA receiving a "Failure to Observe" notice. Repeated failure to observe may result in the termination of a site's Academic Approval.

1.2.4 Certification of shareable information systems.

Does the Lead Agency certify that to the extent practicable and appropriate, any code or software for child care information systems or information technology for which a Lead Agency or other agency expends CCDF funds to develop is made available to other public agencies? This includes public agencies in other States for their use in administering child care or related programs.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

1.2.5 Confidential and personally identifiable information

Certification of policies to protect confidential and personally identifiable information

Does the Lead Agency certify that it has policies in place related to the use and disclosure of confidential and personally identifiable information about children and families receiving CCDF assistance and child care providers receiving CCDF funds?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

1.3 Consultation in the Development of the CCDF Plan

The Lead Agency is responsible for developing the CCDF Plan, and consultation with and meaningful input and feedback from a wide range of representatives is critical for CCDF programs to continually adapt to the changing needs of families, child care programs, and the workforce. Consultation involves meeting with or otherwise obtaining input from an appropriate agency in the development of the State or Territory CCDF Plan. As part of the Plan development process, Lead Agencies must consult with the following:

- (1) Appropriate representatives of general-purpose local government. General purpose local governments are defined by the U.S. Census at https://www2.census.gov/govs/cog/g12_org.pdf.
- (2) The State Advisory Council (SAC) on Early Childhood Education and Care (pursuant to 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act) or similar coordinating body pursuant to 98.14(a)(1)(vii).
- (3) Tribe(s) or Tribal organization(s) within the State. This consultation should be done in a timely manner and at the option of the Tribe(s) or Tribal organization(s).

1.3.1 Consultation efforts in CCDF Plan development

Describe the Lead Agency's consultation efforts in the development of the CCDF Plan, including how and how often the consultation occurred.

- a. Describe how the Lead Agency consulted with appropriate representatives of general-purpose local government: **Information about the proposed 2025-2027 State Plan was shared via a School System Leaders call with all Louisiana parish School Superintendents. Information was also shared via the Early Childhood newsletter, to which most liaisons for the local-level Early Childhood Care and Education Community Network Lead Agencies (many of whom are school systems), along with a link to a survey via which they could provide feedback on the Plan draft. The Lead Agency reviewed all feedback responses submitted as part of the final drafting of the proposed Plan and will continue to consider feedback received when planning for the future.**

Many of the Community Networks also serve as Ready Start Networks, which form coalitions of and share information with other local community leaders and stakeholders, including general-purpose local government representatives. Additionally, many components of this State Plan have been implemented based on prior year consultation with a broad range of community stakeholders.

- a. Describe how the Lead Agency consulted with the State Advisory Council or similar coordinating body: **An overview of the 2025-2027 CCDF State Plan components was shared at the February 2024 meeting of the state's Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council. A draft of the proposed 2025-2027 State Plan was then shared via e-mail with members of the state Advisory Council, along with a link to a survey via which they could provide feedback on the Plan draft. The Lead Agency reviewed all feedback responses submitted as part of the final drafting of the proposed Plan and will continue to consider feedback received when planning for the future.**

Additionally, many components of this State Plan have been proposed and implemented based on prior year consultation with a broad range of community stakeholders, including former and current state Advisory Council members.

- b. Describe, if applicable, how the Lead Agency consulted with Indian Tribes(s) or Tribal organizations(s) within the State: **The Lead Agency shared the drafted State Plan with representatives from the two Tribal organizations within the state and requested both short- and long-term feedback on the Plan.**
- c. Identify other entities, agencies, or organizations consulted on the development of the CCDF Plan (e.g., representatives from the child care workforce, or statewide afterschool networks) and describe those consultation efforts: **In fall, winter, and early spring the Lead Agency requested that other stakeholders, such as child care workforce representatives (e.g., the state Child Care Association) and early childhood care and education advocacy groups share any initial thoughts on Louisiana's 2025-2027 State Plan during the Lead Agency's initial drafting of the Plan. The launching of the draft of the proposed 2025-2027 State Plan was shared via meetings with representatives of those groups and via the Lead Agency website, along with a link to a survey via which they could provide feedback on the Plan draft. The Lead Agency reviewed all feedback responses submitted as part of the final drafting of the proposed Plan. Additionally, many components of this State Plan have been proposed and implemented based on prior year consultation with a broad range of community stakeholders, including representatives from the child care workforce and early childhood care and education advocacy groups.**

1.3.2 Public hearing process

Lead Agencies must hold at least one public hearing in the State or Territory, with sufficient Statewide or Territory-wide distribution of notice prior to such a hearing to enable the public to comment on the provision of child care services under the CCDF Plan.

Describe the Statewide or Territory-wide public hearing process held to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under this Plan.

- i. Date of the public hearing: **5/31/2024**
Reminder: Must be no earlier than January 1, 2024. If more than one public hearing was held, enter one date (e.g., the date of the first hearing, the most recent hearing date, or any hearing date that demonstrates this requirement).
- ii. Date of notice of public hearing: **5/7/2024**
- iii. Was the notice of public hearing posted publicly at least 20 calendar days prior to the date of the public hearing?
[x] Yes.
[] No. If no, describe:
- iv. Describe how the public was notified about the public hearing, including outreach in other languages, information on interpretation services being available, etc. Include specific website links if used to provide notice **The Lead Agency provided notification about the public meeting by posting notice of the meeting on the Lead Agency website along with a draft of the State Plan from May 7-31, both on the homepage banner (<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/>) and on the "Early Childhood Policy & Guidance" page (<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/early-childhood-policy->**

guidance); sending both the Plan draft and information about the public meeting to the state’s Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council members in May; advertising the public hearing in the May monthly newsletter sent to statewide early childhood stakeholders; advertising the public hearing in the public meeting in May of the state Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council; and advertising the public hearing in the public meeting in May of the state Early Childhood Care and Education Commission Task Force, understanding that these groups would share the information further. Notification for the public hearing included information on how to request an ASL translator.

- v. Describe how the approach to the public hearing was inclusive of all geographic regions of the State or Territory: **Notifications were made by the Lead Agency to stakeholders statewide via a posted hearing notice and draft of the proposed 2025-2027 State Plan which was linked on the Lead Agency website along with a link to a survey via which stakeholders statewide could provide feedback on the Plan draft, for review by the Lead Agency as part of the final drafting of the proposed Plan.**
- vi. Describe how the content of the Plan was made available to the public in advance of the public hearing (e.g., the Plan was made available in other languages, in multiple formats, etc.): **A draft of the proposed 2025-2027 State Plan was linked on the Lead Agency website along with a link to a survey via which stakeholders statewide could provide feedback on the Plan draft, for review by the Lead Agency as part of the final drafting of the proposed Plan.**
- vii. Describe how the information provided by the public was taken into consideration regarding the provision of child care services under this Plan: **The Lead Agency reviewed all feedback responses submitted by stakeholders for consideration in the final drafting of the proposed Plan, as well as for consideration of future amendments to the Plan. In addition, feedback will be further considered as the Lead Agency continues to plan for the future.**

1.3.3 Public availability of final Plan, amendments, and waivers

Lead Agencies must make the submitted and approved final Plan, any approved Plan amendments, and any approved requests for temporary waivers publicly available on a website.

- a. Provide the website link to where the Plan, any Plan amendments, and waivers (if applicable) are available. Note: A Plan amendment is required if the website address where the Plan is posted changes.
<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/early-childhood-policy-guidance>
- b. Describe any other strategies that the Lead Agency uses to make submitted and approved CCDF Plan and approved Plan amendments available to the public. Check all that apply and describe the strategies below, including any relevant website links as examples.
 - i. ☒ Working with advisory committees. Describe: **The Lead Agency shared with the state Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council members the drafted State Plan, along with information on how the public could access it and how they and the public could access a survey to provide feedback.**

- ii. ☒ Working with child care resource and referral agencies. Describe: **Information about how to find the drafted Plan and provide feedback was also shared in the Lead Agency's monthly Early Childhood newsletter, which is disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders and to which child care resource and referral agencies subscribe.**
- iii. ☐ Providing translation in other languages. Describe:
- iv. ☐ Sharing through social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, email). Describe:
- v. ☒ Providing notification to key constituents (e.g., parent and family groups, provider groups, advocacy groups, foundations, and businesses). Describe: **Information on how to find the draft of the proposed 2025-2027 State Plan was shared in meetings and via e-mail with advocacy groups, along with a link to a survey via which they could provide feedback on the Plan draft. Information about how to find the drafted Plan and provide feedback was also shared in the Lead Agency's monthly Early Childhood newsletter, which is disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders.**
- vi. ☐ Working with Statewide afterschool networks or similar coordinating entities for out-of-school time. Describe:
- vii. ☒ Direct communication with the child care workforce. Describe: **Information on how to find the draft of the proposed 2025-2027 State Plan was shared in a meeting with the leadership of the Child Care Association of Louisiana and For Providers By Providers, along with a link to a survey via which they could provide feedback on the Plan draft. Information about how to find the drafted Plan and provide feedback was also shared in the Lead Agency's monthly Early Childhood newsletter, which is disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders.**
- viii. ☐ Other. Describe:

2 Child and Family Eligibility and Enrollment and Continuity of Care

Stable and reliable child care arrangements facilitate job stability for parents and healthy development of children. CCDF eligibility and enrollment policies can contribute to these goals. Policies and procedures that create barriers to families accessing CCDF, like inaccessible subsidy applications and onerous reporting requirements, interrupt a parent's ability to work and may deter eligible families from participating in CCDF.

To address these concerns, Lead Agencies must provide children with a minimum of 12 months between eligibility determinations, limit reporting requirements during the 12-month period, and ensure eligibility determination and redetermination processes do not interrupt a parent's work or school.

In this section, Lead Agencies will identify how they define eligible children and families and how the Lead Agency's eligibility and enrollment policies support access for eligible children and families.

2.1 Reducing Barriers to Family Enrollment and Redetermination

Lead Agency enrollment and redetermination policies may not unduly disrupt parents' employment, education, or job training activities to comply with the Lead Agency's or designated

local entity's requirements. Lead Agencies have broad flexibility to design and implement the eligibility practices that reduce barriers to enrollment and redetermination.

Examples include developing strategies to inform families and their providers of an upcoming redetermination and the information that will be required of the family, pre-populating subsidy renewal forms, having parents confirm that the information is accurate, and/or asking only for the information necessary to make an eligibility redetermination. In addition, Lead Agencies can offer a variety of family-friendly methods for submitting documentation for eligibility redetermination that considers the range of needs for families in accessing support (e.g., use of languages other than English, access to transportation, accommodation of parents working non-traditional hours).

2.1.1 Eligibility practices to reduce barriers to enrollment

- a. Does the Lead Agency implement any of the following eligibility practices to reduce barriers at the time of initial eligibility determination? Check all that apply and describe those elements checked.
- i. ☐ Establishing presumptive eligibility while eligibility is being determined. Describe the policy, including the populations benefiting from the policy, and identify how long the period of presumptive eligibility is:
 - ii. ☒ Leveraging eligibility from other public assistance programs. Describe: **Families in foster care, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Vocational Educational Program, and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership program are eligible for immediate services without being placed on a waitlist. Families referred under foster care and STEP are serviced without providing additional verification. Families claiming homelessness are provided with 90 days of services before having to provide verification to the Local Education Agency.**
 - iii. ☒ Coordinating determinations for children in the same household (while still ensuring each child receives 12 months of eligibility). Describe: **The Lead Agency determines eligibility by household and not by individual children. If a certified family requests to add a new child to the case during their eligibility period, the household case will be extended, up to 24 months, to ensure that each child in the household receives a minimum 12-month certification period.**
 - iv. ☒ Self-assessment screening tools for families. Describe: **The Lead Agency provides on its website a checklist with the following questions: ☐Are you responsible for paying child care costs for a child under 13 or a child under 18 with a disability who lives with you? Does every adult in your household work or attend school or a training program for at least 20 hours a week? Is your household's total monthly earned and unearned income less than the amount listed below for your household size? If you answered YES to all of the above questions, you may be eligible for child care assistance.☐**
 - v. ☐ Extended office hours (evenings and/or weekends).
 - vi. ☐ Consultation available via phone.
 - vii. ☒ Other. Describe the Lead Agency policies to process applications efficiently and make timely eligibility determinations: **The Department will initiate application processing within 30 calendar days of the application date. The Lead Agency's**

online application process utilizes enhanced field validations to help ensure all households are submitting required applications, help eliminate the need for multiple requests, and help expedite the case processing timeframe. The Department also provides resources to assist clients with submitting correct and accurate information, to eliminate the need for multiple requests for verification and to expedite application processing times. Resources include Why Isn't My Case Certified, Things to Remember, Application How-to-Guide, and an Income Guidebook. These resources also have corresponding videos to provide further explanation.

viii. ☐ None.

b. Does the Lead Agency use an online subsidy application?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe why an online application is impracticable.

c. Does the Lead Agency use different policies for families receiving TANF assistance?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe the policies: **Families receiving TANF through the Department of Children and Family Services Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Vocational Educational Program are categorically eligible for Child Care Assistance. A referral is sent by the case worker, and families are certified eligible.**

☐ No.

2.1.2 Preventing disruption of eligibility activities

a. Identify, where applicable, the Lead Agency's procedures and policies to ensure that parents do not have their employment, education, or job training unduly disrupted to comply with the State's/Territory's or designated local entity's requirements for the redetermination of eligibility. Check all that apply.

i. ☒ Advance notice to parents of pending redetermination.

ii. ☒ Advance notice to providers of pending redetermination.

iii. ☐ Pre-populated subsidy renewal form.

iv. ☒ Online documentation submission.

v. ☒ Cross-program redeterminations.

vi. ☐ Extended office hours (evenings and/or weekends).

vii. ☐ Consultation available via phone.

viii. ☐ Leveraging eligibility from other public assistance programs.

ix. ☒ Other. Describe: **The Lead Agency will allow presumptive eligibility for up to 30 days, following the re-certification anniversary date (which is the deadline for application for redetermination), so that as redetermination applications are fully processed parents do not temporarily fall out of the Lead Agency systems and have their employment, education, or job training disrupted.**

b. Does the Lead Agency use different policies for families receiving TANF assistance?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe the policies: **Families receiving FITAP (the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program, a program of TANF) through the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS') Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Vocational Educational Program are redetermined through the DCFS agency referral process. Post-FITAP transitional assistance offers these families continued care for an additional 12 months. The redetermination request is completed by the DCFS case worker, and a referral is sent to the Lead Agency.**

☐ No.

2.2 Eligible Children and Families

At eligibility determination or redetermination, children must (1) be younger than age 13; (2) reside with a family whose income does not exceed 85 percent of the State's median income (SMI) for a family of the same size and whose family assets do not exceed \$1,000,000; and (3)(a) reside with a parent or parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program (which can include job search) or (b) receive, or need to receive, protective services as defined by the Lead Agency.

2.2.1 Eligibility criteria: age of children served

Lead Agencies may provide child care assistance for children less than 13 years of age, including continuing to provide assistance to children if they turn 13 during the eligibility period. In addition, Lead Agencies can choose to serve children up to age 19 if those children are unable to care for themselves.

- a. Does your Lead Agency serve the full federally allowable age range of children through age 12?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe the age range of children served and the reason why you made that decision to serve less than the full range of allowable children.

Note: Do not include children incapable of self-care or under court supervision, who are reported below in 2.2.1b and 2.2.1c.

- b. Does the Lead Agency extend eligibility for CCDF-funded child care to children ages 13 and older but below age 19 who are physically and/or mentally incapable of self-care?

☐ No.

☒ Yes.

- i. If yes, the upper age is (may not equal or exceed age 19): **18.00**

- ii. If yes, provide the Lead Agency definition of physical and/or mental incapacity: **Physically, mentally, or emotionally incapable of care for oneself as verified by a physician or licensed psychologist, or by receipt of SSI (applies to children age 13-17), or a child with a disability as determined by an IEP.**

- c. Does the Lead Agency extend eligibility for CCDF-funded child care to children ages 13 and older but below age 19 who are under court supervision?

☐ No.

☒ Yes. If yes, and the upper age is (may not equal or exceed age 19): **18.00**

d. How does the Lead Agency define the following eligibility terms?

- i. **“residing with”: A child or children who customarily reside(s) more than 50% of the time with the parent or guardian who is applying for child care assistance. A child is considered to be residing with a parent or guardian even during scheduled absences lasting up to six weeks from the home or early learning center, if there are definite plans for the child to return to live with that parent or guardian.**
- ii. **“in loco parentis”: An individual who is responsible for the care, supervision, and financial support of a child residing with the individual more than 50% of the time if the child's parent is not living in the home.**

2.2.2 Eligibility criteria: reason for care

Lead Agencies have broad flexibility on the work, training, and educational activities required to qualify for child care assistance. Lead Agencies do not have to set a minimum number of hours for families to qualify for work, training, or educational activities, and there is no requirement to limit authorized child care services strictly based on the work, training, or educational schedule/hours of the parent(s). For example, the Lead Agency can include travel or study time in calculating the amount of needed services.

How does the Lead Agency define the following terms for the purposes of determining CCDF eligibility?

a. Identify which of the following activities are included in your definition of “working” by checking the boxes below:

- i. ☒ An activity for which a wage or salary is paid.
- ii. ☒ Being self-employed.
- iii. ☒ During a time of emergency or disaster, partnering in essential services.
- iv. ☐ Participating in unpaid activities like student teaching, internships, or practicums.
- v. ☐ Time for meals or breaks.
- vi. ☐ Time for travel.
- vii. ☐ Seeking employment or job search.
- viii. ☒ Other. Describe: **Seeking employment or job search is not part of the Lead Agency's definition of "working" but is instead allowed as an exception (when there is not a waitlist):**
"If the head of household is actively seeking employment and/or training, the employment and/or training requirements for household certification provided for in this Paragraph may be waived for 90 days."

b. Identify which of the following activities are included in your definition of “attending job training” by checking the boxes below:

- i. ☒ Vocational/technical job skills training.

- ii. ☒ Apprenticeship or internship program or other on-the-job training.
 - iii. ☒ English as a Second Language training.
 - iv. ☒ Adult Basic Education preparation.
 - v. ☒ Participation in employment service activities.
 - vi. ☐ Time for meals and breaks.
 - vii. ☐ Time for travel.
 - viii. ☐ Hours required for associated activities such as study groups, lab experiences.
 - ix. ☐ Time for outside class study or completion of homework.
 - x. ☒ Other. Describe: **Participating in unpaid activities like student teaching, internship, or practicums**
- c. Identify which of the following diplomas, certificates, degrees, or activities are included in your definition of “attending an educational program” by checking the boxes below:
- i. ☒ Adult High School Diploma or GED.
 - ii. ☒ Certificate programs (12-18 credit hours).
 - iii. ☒ One-year diploma (36 credit hours).
 - iv. ☒ Two-year degree.
 - v. ☒ Four-year degree.
 - vi. ☐ Travel to and from classrooms, labs, or study groups.
 - vii. ☐ Study time.
 - viii. ☒ Hours required for associated activities such as study groups, lab experiences.
 - ix. ☐ Time for outside class study or completion of homework.
 - x. ☐ Applicable meal and break times.
 - xi. ☐ Other. Describe:
- d. Does the Lead Agency impose a Lead Agency-defined minimum number of hours of activity for eligibility?
- ☐ No.
 - ☒ Yes.
- If yes, describe any Lead Agency-imposed minimum requirement for the following:
- ☒ Work. Describe: **20 hours per week; if the child is disabled, it is 15 hours per week. A disabled Head of Household or a disabled legal or non-legal spouse may not be required to meet the employment or training requirement.**
 - ☒ Job training. Describe: **20 hours**
 - ☒ Education. Describe: **Full-time in any any accredited school program**
 - ☒ Combination of allowable activities. Describe: **20 hours**

☒ Other. Describe: **The 20 hour requirement may be reduced to an average of 15 hours per week for a household that qualifies for special needs care.**

- e. Does the Lead Agency allow parents to qualify for CCDF assistance based on education and training without additional work requirements?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe the additional work requirements:

- f. Does the Lead Agency extend eligibility to specific populations of children otherwise not eligible by including them in its definition of “children who receive or need to receive protective services?”

Note: A Lead Agency may elect to provide CCDF-funded child care to children in foster care when foster care parents are *not* working or are *not* in education/training activities, but this provision should be included in the Lead Agency’s protective services definition.

☐ No. If no, skip to question 2.2.3.

☒ Yes. If yes, answer the questions below:

Provide the Lead Agency’s definition of “protective services” by checking below the sub-populations of children that are included:

☒ Children in foster care.

☐ Children in kinship care.

☒ Children who are in families under court supervision.

☒ Children who are in families receiving supports or otherwise engaged with a child welfare agency.

☐ Children participating in a Lead Agency’s Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships program.

☒ Children whose family members are deemed essential workers under a governor-declared state of emergency.

☐ Children experiencing homelessness.

☒ Children whose family has been affected by a natural disaster.

☐ Other. Describe:

- g. Does the Lead Agency waive the income eligibility requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services on a case-by-case basis?

☐ No.

☒ Yes.

- h. Does the Lead Agency waive the eligible activity (e.g., work, job training, education, etc.) requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services on a case-by-case basis?

☐ No.

☒ Yes.

- i. Does the Lead Agency use CCDF funds to provide respite care to custodial parents of children in protective services?

☒ No.

☐ Yes.

2.2.3 Eligibility criteria: deciding entity on family income limits

How are income eligibility limits established?

☒ There is a statewide limit with no local variation.

☐ There is a statewide limit with local variation. Provide the number of income eligibility tables and describe who sets the limits:

☐ Eligibility limits are established locally only. Provide the number of income eligibility tables and describe who sets the limits:

☐ Other. Describe:

2.2.4 Initial eligibility: income limits

- a. Complete the appropriate table to describe family income limits.

- i. Complete the table below to provide the statewide maximum income eligibility percent and dollar limit or threshold:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1	3767.00	85.00	3202.00
2	4926.00	85.00	4187.00
3	6085.00	85.00	5173.00
4	7245.00	85.00	6158.00
5	8404.00	85.00	7143.00

- ii. Does the Lead Agency certify that they use other funds if the income eligibility limit percent exceeds 85% SMI?

☒ Not applicable. The Lead Agency does not allow income eligibility limits above 85% SMI.

☐ Yes, the Lead Agency certifies that they use other funds (non-CCDF funds) for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI.

☐ No. The Lead Agency establishes income eligibility limits above SMI and includes CCDF funds to pay for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI. If checked, describe:

- b. Complete the table below if the Lead Agency has local variation in the maximum income eligibility limit. Complete the table for the region/locality with the highest eligibility limit, region/locality with the lowest eligibility limit, and the region/locality that is most

populous:

i. Region/locality with the highest eligibility limit:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

ii. Region/locality with the lowest eligibility limit:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

iii. Region/locality that is most populous:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

iv. Does the Lead Agency certify that they use other funds if the income eligibility limit percent exceeds 85% SMI?

[] Not applicable. The Lead Agency does not allow income eligibility limits above 85% SMI.

☐ Yes, the Lead Agency certifies that they use other funds (not CCDF funds) for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI.

☐ No. The Lead Agency establishes income eligibility limits above 85% SMI and includes CCDF funds to pay for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI. If checked, describe:

c. How does the Lead Agency define “income” for the purposes of eligibility at the point of initial determination? Check all that apply:

- i. ☒ Gross wages or salary.
- ii. ☒ Disability or unemployment compensation.
- iii. ☒ Workers’ compensation.
- iv. ☐ Spousal support, child support.
- v. ☒ Survivor and retirement benefits.
- vi. ☒ Rent for room within the family’s residence.
- vii. ☒ Pensions or annuities.
- viii. ☒ Inheritance.
- ix. ☐ Public assistance.
- x. ☐ Other. Describe:

d. What is the effective date for these income eligibility limits? **February 2024**

e. Income limits must be established and reported in terms of current SMI based on the most recent data published by the Bureau of the Census, even if the federal poverty level is used in implementing the program.

What federal data does the Lead Agency use when reporting the income eligibility limits?

☐ LIHEAP. If checked, provide the publication year of the LIHEAP guideline estimates used by the Lead Agency:

☒ Other. Describe: **NCSIA SMI FPL Calculation Spreadsheet (it says FFY 2024 Annual State median Income Estimates / Effective Oct. 1, 2023)**

f. Provide the direct URL/website link, if available, for the income eligibility limits.
<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/ccap-sliding-fee-scale.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

2.2.5 Income eligibility: irregular fluctuations in earnings

Lead Agencies must take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings in initial eligibility determination and redetermination processes. The Lead Agency must ensure that temporary increases in income, including temporary increases that can result in a monthly income exceeding 85 percent of SMI from seasonal employment or other temporary work schedules, do not affect eligibility or family co-payments.

Check the processes that the Lead Agency uses to take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings.

- i. ☒ Average the family’s earnings over a period of time (e.g., 12 months).

Identify the period of time **The family's income is averaged over a period of time based on the best available information from the client, resulting in an average monthly amount. For the majority of applicants who are wage earners, the Lead Agency reviews representative check stubs received in the prior 45 days. The Lead Agency may average earnings for applicants with fluctuations in earnings over a 12-month period.**

- ii. ☒ Request earning statements that are most representative of the family's monthly income.
- iii. ☒ Deduct temporary or irregular increases in wages from the family's standard income level.
- iv. ☒ Other. Describe the other ways the Lead Agency takes into account irregular fluctuations in earnings: **Fluctuating income that varies or changes continually because of locale, season, weather, or production schedule is averaged over a period of time, resulting in an average monthly amount. When income fluctuates between periods of considerable overtime or high productivity and severely reduced work hours or low productivity, the family income is averaged over a period of time based on the situation to calculate an average monthly amount. For self-employed earners or others, the Lead Agency may average a family's yearly income over a 12-month period or over the amount of time the family has been working, if the family worked less than 12 months. The method of determining the average varies based on the fluctuating income type and frequency.**

2.2.6 Family asset limit

- a. When calculating income eligibility, does the Lead Agency ensure each eligible family does not have assets that exceed \$1,000,000?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- b. Does the Lead Agency waive the asset limit on a case-by-case basis for families defined as receiving, or in need of, protective services?

☒ No.

☐ Yes. If yes, describe the policy or procedure:

2.2.7 Additional eligibility criteria

Aside from the eligibility conditions or rules which have been described in 2.2.1 – 2.2.6, is any additional eligibility criteria applied during:

- a. ☐ Eligibility determination? If checked, describe:
- b. ☐ Eligibility redetermination? If checked, describe:

2.2.8 Documentation of eligibility determination

Lead Agencies must document and verify that children receiving CCDF funds meet eligibility criteria at the time of eligibility determination and redetermination.

Check the information that the Lead Agency documents and verifies at initial determination and redetermination and describe what information is required and how often.

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
[x]	[x]	Applicant identity. Describe how you verify: The Lead Agency requires an applicant to verify identity when applying for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). A driver's license, identification card, or birth certificate is requested to verify identity.
[x]	[x]	Applicant's relationship to the child. Describe how you verify: While the Lead Agency requires the disclosure of the applicant's relationship to the child, the Lead Agency does not require that the applicant be related to the child for whom they are applying for CCAP. Additionally, when the Lead Agency verifies the age of a child, the verification provided generally shows that the applicant's relationship corresponds to the client's statement. Client statements, immunization records, and birth certificates are documents used to verify the child's relationship to the Head of Household.
[x]	[]	Child's information for determining eligibility (e.g., identity, age, citizen/immigration status). Describe how you verify: Staff must verify the age of each child in the household under 18 years of age at initial certification and when adding a child. The preferred documents for verifying a child's age include an official birth record or a baptismal certificate from a church with valid records. If these do not exist, other sources of verification include passports, naturalization papers, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) documentation, insurance policies that are more than three years old, church records, medical records, U.S. Census records, immunization or other Health Unit records, school records, or other reliable documents. The document must include the child's name and date of birth.
[x]	[x]	Work. Describe how you verify: Employment and Training (E&T) activity hours must be verified for each Training or Employment Mandatory Participant (TEMP). Acceptable forms of verification include check stubs, a current Past or Anticipated Wage Verification Letter (OFS 87) form, statement from the employer, or self-employment records.

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
[x]	[x]	Job training or educational program. Describe how you verify: Employment and Training (E&T) activity hours must be verified for each Training or Employment Mandatory Participant (TEMP). Acceptable forms of verification include a statement from a job training or educational program or an official class schedule.
[x]	[x]	Family income. Describe how you verify: Non-exempt income must be verified at initial application, redetermination, and when reported as an interim change. Sources of earned income verification may include pay stubs, W-2 forms, income tax returns, sales records, and employers' statements. Sources of unearned income verification may include social security or SSI income. Staff must document verification and computation of household income at the initial application, when a change is reported, and at each redetermination or subsequent application.

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
[x]	[x]	<p>Household composition. Describe how you verify: A Child Care Assistance household is defined as a group of individuals who live together. The child must be living with the Head of Household more than half the time to be included as a household member. Factors affecting the composition of the household must be verified only if questionable. Household composition may be verified through self-attestation along with birth records or baptismal certificates. If these do not exist, other sources of verification include passports, naturalization papers, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) documentation, insurance policies that are more than three years old, church records, medical records, U.S. Census records, immunization or other Health Unit records, school records, or other reliable documents. The document must include the child's name and date of birth.</p> <p>The following individuals who live together must be included in the Child Care Assistance household: 1) Head of Household; 2) Head of Household's legal spouse or non-legal spouse; 3) disabled adult parent who is unable to care for himself/herself and his/her child(ren) who are in need of care as verified by a doctor's statement or by worker determination; 4) all children under the age of 18 who are dependent on the Head of Household and/or spouse including foster children, a Minor Unmarried Parent (MUP) who is not legally emancipated, and the MUP's children.</p>
[x]	[x]	<p>Applicant residence. Describe how you verify: While the Lead Agency does not require an applicant to verify residency when applying for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), applicants are required to provide a residential address within Louisiana when applying for services. Families applying as homeless or participating in transitional living are not required to provide a residential address, but a mailing address is required.</p>

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
[x]	[x]	Other. Describe how you verify: Sufficient evidence of immunity or immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases recommended by the Office of Public Health must be provided for each child in need of care who is younger than 18 years of age. Sufficient evidence that such an immunization program is up-to-date or in progress may be substituted for proof of immunization and must be obtained at initial application, redetermination, changing provider(s), and when assistance is requested for an additional child. If vaccination is contraindicated for medical reasons, the parent shall provide a written statement from a physician indicating said medical reasons. Parents may also object to the immunizations for any other reason, in which case the parent shall provide a written statement of dissent.

2.2.9 Exception to TANF work requirements

Lead Agencies must ensure that families with young children participating in TANF will be informed of their right not to be sanctioned under the TANF work requirement if the custodial parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain child care for a child under age six, in accordance with Section 407(e)(2) of the Social Security Act.

- a. Identify the TANF agency that established these criteria or definitions: **The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)**
- b. Provide the following definitions established by the TANF agency:
 - i. “Appropriate child care”: **Child care provided by any state-licensed facility, child care provided by a state-registered provider, or child care provided by a state-certified relative or private party of the parent's choice.**
 - ii. “Reasonable distance”: **30 minutes from the participant's home or work site.**
 - iii. “Unsuitability of informal child care”: **Child care is unavailable or unsuitable if basic health and safety standards are not met.**
 - iv. “Affordable child care arrangements”: **Child care is unavailable if costs exceed established maximum limits for the state-administered Child Care Assistance Program.**
- c. How are parents who receive TANF benefits informed about the exception to the individual penalties associated with the TANF work requirements?
 - i. ☐ In writing
 - ii. ☐ Verbally
 - iii. ☒ Other. Describe: **Families have a DCFS Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Coach who explains the responsibilities, exceptions to those responsibilities, and**

sanction policy to participants. STEP caseworkers and managers participate in a collaborative eligibility monthly meeting so they can stay abreast of all changes in child care eligibility and keep child care staff informed of family needs and concerns. If a TANF recipient is required to participate in STEP but the participant claims they cannot, the TANF worker and STEP Coach work to determine whether the participant qualifies for “good cause” and help with any challenges prior to taking any action that may impact that participant's benefits.

2.3 Prioritizing Services for Vulnerable Children and Families

Lead Agencies must give priority for child care assistance to children with special needs, families with very low incomes (considering family size), and children experiencing homelessness. A Lead Agency has the flexibility to prioritize other populations of children.

Note: Statute defines children with disabilities, and CCDF rule gives flexibility to Lead Agencies to include vulnerable populations in their definition of children with special needs.

CCDF defines “child experiencing homelessness” as a child who is homeless, as defined in Section 725 of Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a).

2.3.1 Lead Agency definition of priority groups

Describe how the Lead Agency defines:

- d. “Children with special needs.” **The Lead Agency defines a child with special needs as a child through age 17 who has a current Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Plan (IEP) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or who receives supplemental security income (SSI).**
- e. “Families with very low incomes.” **The Lead Agency defines economically disadvantaged children (children whose families are low-income) as children living in families with a home income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. The agency ensures co-payments that are specific to income level and offers lower-income families services at 100% reimbursement, to ensure that this most vulnerable population is least affected by copayments that may make affordable child care difficult.**

2.3.2 Prioritization of child care services

Identify how the Lead Agency will prioritize child care services for the following children and families.

- a. Complete the table below to indicate how the identified populations are prioritized.

Population Prioritized	Prioritize for enrollment in child care services	Serve without placing on waiting list	Waive co-payments as described in 3.3.1	Pay higher rate for access to higher quality care	Use grants or contracts to reserve spots	Other
Children with special needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Describe: The employment and training activity requirements may be reduced to an average of 15 hours per week for households that qualify for special needs child care.
Families with very low incomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe:

Population Prioritized	Prioritize for enrollment in child care services	Serve without placing on waiting list	Waive co-payments as described in 3.3.1	Pay higher rate for access to higher quality care	Use grants or contracts to reserve spots	Other
Children experiencing homelessness, as defined by CCDF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Describe: The employment and training activity requirements may be waived for parents or persons acting as parents who are experiencing homelessness and who demonstrate that they are seeking employment or participating in a transitional living program. If a household is experiencing homelessness, the household shall have 90 calendar days from the date of its initial determination of eligibility to submit documentation supporting the initial determination of eligibility.
(Optional) Families receiving TANF, those attempting to transition off TANF, and those at risk of becoming dependent on TANF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe:

- a. Does the Lead Agency define any other priority groups?

☐ No.

☒ Yes. If yes, identify the populations prioritized and describe how the Lead Agency prioritizes services: **Children in need of protective services or in foster care automatically qualify for child care assistance and can begin receiving assistance from the initial referral by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The Lead Agency collaborates with DCFS on these cases. Children in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships are also prioritized and are not placed on a waiting list.**

2.3.3 Enrollment and grace period for children experiencing homelessness

Lead Agencies must allow (after an initial eligibility determination) children experiencing homelessness to receive CCDF services while required eligibility documentation is obtained.

Lead Agencies must establish a grace period that allows children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care to receive CCDF assistance while providing their families with a reasonable time to take any necessary actions to comply with State, Territory, or local immunization and other health and safety requirements. The length of such a grace period must be established in consultation with the State, Territorial, or Tribal public health agency.

Note: Any payment for such a child during the grace period may not be considered an error or improper payment.

- a. Describe the strategies to allow CCDF enrollment of children experiencing homelessness while required eligibility documentation is obtained: **Families experiencing homelessness are certified eligible and receive a 90 day grace period to secure eligibility documentation. In addition, they are referred to the homeless liaison to provide assistance in securing necessary documentation. The state's Homeless Coordinator role is housed in the Lead Agency. The state's Homeless Coordinator, also known as the McKinney-Vento Liaison, works with local education agencies to coordinate these services.**
- b. Describe the grace period for each population below and how it allows them to receive CCDF assistance while providing their families with a reasonable time to take any necessary actions to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements.
- i. Provide the policy for a grace period for:
- Children experiencing homelessness: **Children who are past due on immunizations are asked to send an appointment card. Children experiencing homelessness are given a grace period of 90 days to provide an appointment card or up-to-date immunizations.**
- Children who are in foster care: **Children who are past due on immunizations are asked to send an appointment card. Children in foster care are given a grace period of 90 days to provide an appointment card or up-to-date immunizations.**
- ii. Does the Lead Agency certify that the length of the grace period was established in consultation with the State, Territorial, or Tribal public health agency?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- c. Describe how the Lead Agency coordinates with licensing agencies and other relevant State, Territorial, Tribal, and local agencies to provide referrals and support to help families with children receiving services during a grace period comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements: **The Lead Agency is the licensing agency and contracts with Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and local community networks that further support local-level enrollment. Policy and procedure allow for a grace period for families experiencing homelessness to comply with reporting and documentation requirements of child care assistance. Such families can begin receiving child care assistance prior to producing such documentation, including the requirement for documentation of immunization. In addition, Lead Agency staff may review state immunization records directly through the Louisiana Immunization Network for Kids (LINKS) in collaboration with LDH, even if that information is not provided by the family, to try to facilitate children receiving services as quickly as possible. Foster care children do not apply for services: they are referred to the Lead Agency by DCFS and are categorically-eligible for care based on their need; consequently, a grace period for documents and verification is not applicable for these children.**

2.4 Lead Agency Outreach to Families Experiencing Homelessness, Families with Limited English Proficiency, and Persons with Disabilities

The Lead Agency must conduct outreach and provide services to families with limited English proficiency, families experiencing homelessness, and persons with disabilities.

2.4.1 Families with limited English proficiency and persons with disabilities: outreach and services

- a. Check the strategies the Lead Agency or partners utilize to conduct outreach and provide services to eligible families with limited English proficiency. Check all that apply.
- i. ☒ Application in languages other than English (application and related documents, brochures, provider notices).
 - ii. ☒ Informational materials in languages other than English.
 - iii. ☒ Website in languages other than English.
 - iv. ☐ Lead Agency accepts applications at local community-based locations.
 - v. ☐ Bilingual caseworkers or translators available.
 - vi. ☐ Bilingual outreach workers.
 - vii. ☒ Partnerships with community-based organizations.
 - viii. ☒ Collaboration with Head Start, Early Head Start, or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start.
 - ix. ☐ Home visiting programs.
 - x. ☒ Other. Describe: **The Lead Agency works in collaboration with partners such as Local Education Agency staff who may have access to bilingual staff and programs that support limited English proficiency children and their families. The Child Care Assistance Program paper application is also available in other languages.**

Furthermore, the Lead Agency website can be translated into many other languages through a selection option visible on the site. Finally, the Lead Agency call center has translation services available: When a call center agent receives a call from someone needing translation services, the agent merges into the call an interpreter from Language Line; on the rare occasion that the call is disconnected, the agent will call the client back and re-merge the call with an interpreter.

- b. Check the strategies the Lead Agency or partners utilize to conduct outreach and provide services to eligible families with a person(s) with a disability. Check all that apply.
 - i. ☐ Applications and public informational materials available in braille and other communication formats for access by individuals with disabilities.
 - ii. ☒ Websites that are accessible (e.g., Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act).
 - iii. ☐ Caseworkers with specialized training/experience in working with individuals with disabilities.
 - iv. ☐ Ensuring accessibility of environments and activities for all children.
 - v. ☒ Partnerships with State and local programs and associations focused on disability- related topics and issues.
 - vi. ☐ Partnerships with parent associations, support groups, and parent-to-parent support groups, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) federally funded Parent Training and Information Centers.
 - vii. ☒ Partnerships with State and local IDEA Part B, Section 619 and Part C providers and agencies.
 - viii. ☒ Availability and/or access to specialized services (e.g., mental health, behavioral specialists, therapists) to address the needs of all children.
 - ix. ☒ Other. Describe: **The Lead Agency has worked with partners to conduct Developmental Screening Initiatives to be able to strive toward all children in Louisiana being screened using validated tools to measure and assess multiple aspects of their growth and development.**

2.4.2 Families experiencing homelessness: Outreach and technical assistance efforts

- a. Check, where applicable, the procedures used to conduct outreach for children experiencing homelessness and their families.
 - i. ☒ Lead Agency accepts applications at local community-based locations.
 - ii. ☐ Partnerships with community-based organizations.
 - iii. ☒ Partnering with homeless service providers, McKinney-Vento liaisons, and others who work with families experiencing homelessness to provide referrals to child care.
 - iv. ☒ Other. Describe: **The Lead Agency accepts applications at local community-based locations on an as-needed or as-requested basis (e.g., emergency shelters, community events), as well as partners with Lead Agency-funded Early Childhood Guides in some communities, to ensure a wide range of opportunities are available for applications.**

- b. The Lead Agency must provide training and technical assistance (TA) to providers and appropriate Lead Agency (or designated entity) staff on identifying and serving children and families experiencing homelessness.
 - i. Describe the Lead Agency’s training and TA efforts for providers in identifying and serving children and their families experiencing homelessness. **Providers receive training on identifying and serving children and their families experiencing homelessness during technical assistance training for providers, regional forums, and provider conference sessions. The CCAP homeless liaison also provides direct assistance to providers and families daily as applications are received and as a collaborative effort between the LEA homeless liaisons and the CCAP homeless liaison.**
 - ii. Describe the Lead Agency’s training and TA efforts for Lead Agency (or designated entity) staff in identifying and serving children and their families experiencing homelessness. **Lead Agency Early Childhood staff attend training on identifying and serving children and families experiencing homelessness. The Lead Agency is the Louisiana Department of Education, which houses the state Homeless Coordinator who works with the homeless liaisons within local education agencies to coordinate services for families experiencing homelessness. Homeless liaisons have received in-depth training on how to identify homeless children and their families and are knowledgeable of the community resources available for them. The CCAP homeless liaison is trained and provides direct assistance to providers and families in accessing resources. In addition, through coordinated enrollment, local community networks reach out to families experiencing homelessness and assist them in accessing community resources.**

2.5 Promoting Continuity of Care

Lead Agencies must consider children’s development and promote continuity of care when authorizing child care services and must establish a minimum 12-month period for each child, both at the initial eligibility determination and redetermination.

2.5.1 Children’s development

Describe how the Lead Agency’s eligibility, enrollment, reporting, and redetermination policies promote continuity of care in order to support children’s development. **In order to ensure consistent relationships that support a child’s continued development, the Lead Agency ensures continuity of care in instances of unforeseen circumstances (such as a parent dying), changes in family dynamics (such as a parent going to jail), and changes in eligibility status with other agency programs (i.e., DCFS). The Lead Agency will also allow a presumptive eligibility period of up to 30 days, following the re-certification anniversary date (which is the deadline for application for redetermination), to ensure continuity of child care services to support children’s development, as redetermination is determined.**

2.5.2 Minimum 12-month eligibility

Lead Agencies must establish a minimum 12-month eligibility period for each child, both at the initial eligibility determination and at redetermination to support continuity in child care assistance and reduce barriers to families retaining eligibility. This requirement is:

- Regardless of changes in income, Lead Agencies may not terminate CCDF assistance during the minimum 12-month period if a family has an increase in income that exceeds the Lead Agency's income eligibility threshold but not the federal threshold of 85 percent of SMI; and
- Regardless of temporary changes in participation in work, training, or educational activities.

- a. Does the Lead Agency certify that their policies or procedures provide a minimum 12-month eligibility period for each child at initial eligibility determination?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- b. Does the Lead Agency certify that its definition of "temporary change" includes each of the minimum required elements?

1. Any time-limited absence from work for an employed parent due to such reasons as the need to care for a family member or an illness.
2. Any interruption in work for a seasonal worker who is not working between regular industry work seasons.
3. Any student holiday or break for a parent participating in a training or educational program.
4. Any reduction in work, training, or education hours, as long as the parent is still working or attending a training or educational program.
5. Any cessation of work or attendance at a training or educational program not listed above. In these cases only, Lead Agencies may establish a period of 3 months or longer.
6. Any change in age, including a child turning 13 years old during the minimum 12-month eligibility period.
7. Any changes in residency within the State or Territory.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- c. Are the policies different for redetermination?

☒ No.

☐ Yes. If yes, provide the additional/varying policies for redetermination:

2.5.3 Job search and continued assistance

- a. Does the Lead Agency consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at initial eligibility determination and/or at the minimum 12-month eligibility redetermination? (Note: If yes, Lead Agencies must provide a minimum of 3 months of job search.) Check all that apply:

- i. ☒ Yes. The Lead Agency does consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at initial eligibility determination. If yes, describe:

(Bulletin 139 Section 509 A(5)e.b.)

If the head of household is actively seeking employment and/or training, the employment and/or training requirements for household certification may be

waived for 90 days. To become certified as a CCAP household in accordance with this exception, the household must meet all certification requirements other than the employment and/or training activities and must submit all documentation required for certification, as well as documentation establishing that the Head of Household is actively seeking employment and/or training. A household certified for CCAP in accordance with this exception will be certified for 90 days, with eligibility for services beginning on the day the household is certified. At the end of 90 days from the date of certification, certification under this exception ends. However, during the 90-day certification period, if the Head of Household submits documentation establishing employment and/or training meeting the requirements, then the household may remain certified without interruption in accordance with the general certification requirements. Households are not eligible for this exception at initial application if there is a statewide waitlist of eligible participants implemented.

- ii. ☒ Yes. The Lead Agency does consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at redetermination. If yes, describe: **An application for household certification under this exception will be denied if the household has previously been certified under this exception within the past 24 months.**
 - iii. ☐ No. The Lead Agency does not consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at initial eligibility determination or redetermination.
 - b. Does the Lead Agency continue assistance during the minimum 12-month eligibility period when a parent has a non-temporary loss or cessation of eligible activity?
 - ☒ Yes. The Lead Agency continues assistance.
 - ☐ No, the Lead Agency discontinues assistance.
 - i. If no, describe the Lead Agency's policies for discontinuing assistance due to a parent's non-temporary change:
 - ii. If no, describe what specific actions/changes trigger the job-search period after each such loss or cessation:
 - iii. If no, how long is the job-search period where a family can continue assistance (must be at least 3 months)?
 - c. The Lead Agency may discontinue assistance prior to the next minimum 12-month redetermination in the limited circumstances listed below. Check and provide the policy for all circumstances in which the Lead Agency chooses to discontinue assistance prior to the next minimum 12-month redetermination:
 - i. ☐ Not applicable.
 - ii. ☒ Excessive unexplained absences despite multiple attempts by the Lead Agency or designated entity to contact the family and provider, including the prior notification of a possible discontinuation of assistance.

Provide the Lead Agency's policy defining the number of unexplained absences identified as excessive: **Excessive absences are failure of a child to attend at least one day in the prior certified month. An "unexplained absence" is an absence for which the Head of Household has not provided**

verbal or written notification to the provider or the Lead Agency about the absence. The Lead Agency conducts an underutilization check monthly. Families with children missing 30 days or more are notified of possible termination if children are not attending. Families with children missing 60 days or more are notified of termination of the CCAP services for failure to attend.

- iii. ☒ A change in residency outside of the State or Territory.

Provide the Lead Agency's policy for a change in residency outside the State or Territory: **All households must reside in Louisiana to be eligible for child care services. Households living in Louisiana for any purpose other than a vacation meet the residency requirement. Households do not have to establish a permanent home or intend to remain in the state to be eligible. When a household reports the residential address has changed to residency outside of the state, the case should be closed following procedures of CCAP closures or terminations and notices sent to the last provided address.**

- iv. ☒ Substantiated fraud or intentional program violations that invalidate prior determinations of eligibility.

Provide the Lead Agency's definition of fraud/intentional program violations that lead to discontinued assistance: **Violations may include any act of fraud, such as the submission of false or altered documents or information; intentionally making a false or misleading statement; or misrepresenting, concealing, or withholding relevant facts (noted in BESE Bulletin 139 Section 519, "Termination or Refusal of Renewal of Household Certification and Eligibility Periods for Households").**

2.5.4 Reporting changes during the minimum 12-month eligibility period

Lead Agencies may only require families to report changes that impact a family's eligibility, including only if the family's income exceeds 85 percent of the SMI, taking into account irregular fluctuations in income, or there is a non-temporary change in the parent's work, training, or education status, during the 12-month eligibility period. Lead Agencies may also require families to report that enable the lead agency to contact the family or pay providers, such as a new telephone number or address.

Note: The response below should exclude reporting requirements for a graduated phase-out, which are described in question 2.5.5.

Does the Lead Agency limit what families must report during the 12-month eligibility period to the changes described above?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

2.5.5 Policies and procedures for graduated phase-out of assistance at redetermination

Lead Agencies that establish initial family income eligibility below 85 percent of SMI must provide a graduated phase-out of assistance for families whose income has increased above the Lead

Agency's initial income threshold at the time of redetermination but remains below the federal threshold of 85 percent of SMI.

Lead Agencies that provide a graduated phase-out must implement a two-tiered eligibility threshold, with the second tier of eligibility (used at the time of eligibility redetermination) to be set at:

- (i) 85 percent of SMI for a family of the same size; or,
- (ii) An amount lower than 85 percent of SMI for a family of the same size but above the Lead Agency's initial eligibility threshold that:
 - (A) Takes into account the typical household budget of a family with a low income
 - (B) Provides justification that the second eligibility threshold is:
 - (1) Sufficient to accommodate increases in family income over time that are typical for workers with low incomes and that promote and support family economic stability
 - (2) Reasonably allows a family to continue accessing child care services without unnecessary disruption

At redetermination, a child must be considered eligible if their parents are participating in an eligible activity even if their income exceeds the Lead Agency's initial eligibility income limit as long as their income does not exceed the second tier of eligibility. Note that once determined eligible, the child must be considered eligible for a full minimum 12-month eligibility period, even if the parents' income exceeds the second tier of eligibility during the eligibility period, as long as it does not exceed 85 percent of SMI.

A child eligible for services via the graduated phase-out of assistance is considered eligible under the same conditions as other eligible children with the exception of the co-payment restrictions, which do not apply to a graduated phase-out. To help families transition from child care assistance, Lead Agencies may gradually adjust co-payment amounts in proportion to a family's income growth for families whose children are determined eligible under a graduated phase-out. Lead Agencies may require additional reporting on changes in family income but must still ensure that any additional reporting requirements do not constitute an undue burden on families.

Check and describe the option that best identifies the Lead Agency's policies and procedures regarding the graduated phase-out of assistance.

- a. ☒ Not applicable. The Lead Agency sets its initial eligibility threshold at 85 percent of SMI and therefore is not required to provide a graduated phase-out period. (If checked, skip to question 3.1.1.)
- b. ☐ The Lead Agency sets the second tier of eligibility at 85 percent of SMI. If checked, describe the policies and procedures:
 - i. ☐ Lead Agency adjusts the family's co-pay during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe how the Lead Agency gradually adjusts co-payment for families under a graduated phase-out period in proportion to a family's income growth. Include information on the percentage or amount of change made in the co-payment during graduated phase-out:
 - ii. ☐ Lead Agency requires additional reporting requirements during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe:
- c. ☐ The Lead Agency sets the second tier of eligibility at an amount lower than 85 percent

of SMI for a family of the same size but above the Lead Agency's initial eligibility threshold. If checked, provide the following information:

- i. Provide the income level (\$/month) and the percent of SMI for the second tier of eligibility for a family of three:
- ii. Describe how the second eligibility threshold takes into account the typical household budget of a low-income family:
- iii. Describe how the second eligibility threshold is sufficient to accommodate increases in family income over time that are typical for low-income workers and that promote and support family economic stability:
- iv. Describe how the second eligibility threshold reasonably allows a family to continue accessing child care services without unnecessary disruption:
- v. ☐ Lead Agency adjusts the family's co-pay during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe how the Lead Agency gradually adjusts co-payment for families under a graduated phase-out period in proportion to a family's income growth. Include information on the percentage or amount of change made in the co-payment during graduated phase-out:
- vi. ☐ Lead Agency requires additional reporting requirements during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe:

3 Child Care Affordability

CCDF subsidies make child care more affordable for eligible families, providing access to a greater range of child care options that allow parents to work, go to school, or enroll in training and they allow parents to access higher quality care options that better support children's development. CCDF requires some families participating in CCDF to pay an affordable co-payment set by the Lead Agency to cover a part of their care. But co-payments can be a significant and destabilizing financial strain on family budgets and a barrier to parent employment, and the CCDBG Act requires that the co-payment amount not be a barrier to families participating in CCDF. Lead Agencies may not set parent co-payments above 7% of family income regardless of gradual phase-out policies and regardless of the number of children receiving assistance. Lead Agencies are encouraged to set co-payments much lower than 7% to make child care more affordable for more families and have broad flexibility to waive co-payments for too many participants. Lead Agencies must ensure that the total payment to a child care provider is not reduced because of family's lowered or waived co-payment.

In this section, Lead Agencies will identify how they determine an eligible family's co-payment, the policies in place to waive or ensure co-payments are affordable for families, and how the Lead Agency improves access for children and families in economically and/or socially marginalized communities.

3.1 Family Co-payments

Lead Agencies must establish and periodically revise a sliding-fee scale for families receiving CCDF services that varies based on income and the size of the family to determine each family's contribution (i.e., co-payment) and does not create a barrier to receiving CCDF assistance. In addition to income and the size of the family, the Lead Agency may use other factors as

appropriate when determining family contributions/co-payments. Lead Agencies may not use price of care or amount of subsidy payment in determining co-payments. Lead Agencies must ensure that the total payment to a child care provider is not reduced because of family's lowered or waived co-payment.

3.1.1 Family co-payment

Lead Agencies may not charge any family more than 7% of a family's gross income, regardless of the number of children participating in CCDF.

- a. What is the maximum percent of a family's gross income any family could be charged as a co-payment? **5.25%**
- b. Does the Lead Agency certify that their sliding fee scales are always based on income and family size (regardless of how many different scales they may use)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

3.1.2 Sliding fee scale

Provide the CCDF co-payments for eligible families in the table(s) below according to family size for one child in care.

- a. Is the sliding fee scale set statewide?
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe how the sliding fee scale is set:
- b. Complete the table below. If the sliding fee scale is not set statewide, complete the table for the most populous locality:

	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>
Family Size	Lowest monthly income at initial eligibility where the family is first charged a co-pay (greater than \$0).	What is the monthly co-payment for a family of this size based on the income level in (A)?	What percentage of income is the co-payment in (B)?	Highest monthly income at initial eligibility where a family is charged a co-pay before a family is no longer eligible.	What is the monthly co-payment for a family of this size based on the income level in (D)?	What percentage of income is this co-payment in (E)?
1						
2	3154.00	44.00	1.40	4187.00	220.00	5.25
3	3896.00	44.00	1.10	5173.00	220.00	4.25
4	4637.00	44.00	0.95	6158.00	220.00	3.60
5	5379.00	44.00	0.77	7143.00	220.00	3.10

- c. What is the effective date of the sliding-fee scale(s)? **February 1, 2024**
- d. Provide the link(s) to the sliding-fee scale(s):
<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/ccap-sliding-fee-scale.pdf?sfvrsn=2>
- e. Does the Lead Agency allow providers to charge families additional amounts above the required co-payment in instances where the provider's price exceeds the subsidy payment?
☐ No.
☒ Yes.
 If yes:
 - i. Provide the rationale for the Lead Agency's policy to allow providers to charge families additional amounts above the required co-payment, including a demonstration of how the policy does not provide a barrier and promotes affordability and access for families: **Rates vary across the state and for different types of care (e.g., Type III Early Learning Centers, School Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Providers, In-Home Providers and Military Child Care Centers). Allowing providers to charge the additional amount above the required co-payment and CCAP subsidy allows families access to a broader range of providers and thus to choose the right provider for their children. In addition, the Lead Agency promotes affordability for families and further access for families by paying subsidy rates at the highest rate, regardless of the amount the provider charges.**
 - ii. Provide data (including data on the size and frequency of such amounts) on the extent to which CCDF providers charge additional amounts to families: **On the most recent Market Rate Survey (MRS) conducted fall 2023), CCDF providers indicate charging additional amounts each year to families for registration, supplies, field trips, technology, and transportation. 66.6% of MRS respondents reported charging an average of \$109.78 for registration. 23% of MRS respondents reported charging an average of \$101.55 for supplies. 12.2% of MRS respondents reported charging an average of \$104.40 for field trips. 2.7% of MRS respondents reported charging an average of \$250.60 for technology. 5.1% of MRS respondents reported charging an average of \$135.06 for transportation. In addition, CCDF providers sometimes charged families an average daily rate of tuition higher than the CCAP subsidy. For example, the CCDF center average daily charged rate for 3 year olds was \$34.10, \$2.60 higher than the CCAP subsidy; the CCDF center average daily charged rate for 4 year olds was \$33.10, \$1.60 higher than the CCAP subsidy; the CCDF Family Child Care provider average daily charged rate for 3 year olds was \$33.46, \$4.46 higher than the CCAP subsidy; the CCDF Family Child Care provider average daily charged rate for 4 year olds was \$32.36, \$3.36 higher than the CCAP subsidy; and the CCDF Family Child Care provider average daily charged rate for 5 year olds was \$30.32, \$1.32 higher than the CCAP subsidy.**

3.2 Calculation of Co-Payment

Lead agencies must calculate a family's contribution (or co-payment), taking into account income and family size, and Lead Agencies may choose to consider other factors in their calculation.

3.2.1 Family co-payment calculation

- a. How is the family's contribution calculated, and to whom is it applied? Check if the fee is a dollar amount or if the fee is a percent of income below, and then check all that apply under the selection, as appropriate.
- i. ☒ The fee is a dollar amount and (check all that apply):
- ☒ The fee is per child, with the same fee for each child.
 - ☐ The fee is per child and is discounted for two or more children.
 - ☐ The fee is per child up to a maximum per family.
 - ☐ No additional fee is charged after a certain number of children.
 - ☐ The fee is per family.
 - ☐ The contribution schedule varies because it is set locally/regionally (as indicated in 1.2.1). Describe:
 - ☐ Other. Describe:
- ii. ☐ The fee is a percent of income and (check all that apply):
- ☐ The fee is per child, with the same percentage applied for each child.
 - ☐ The fee is per child, and a discounted percentage is applied for two or more children.
 - ☐ The fee is per child up to a maximum per family.
 - ☐ No additional percentage is charged after a certain number of children.
 - ☐ The fee is per family.
 - ☐ The contribution schedule varies because it is set locally/regionally (as indicated in 1.2.1). Describe:
 - ☐ Other. Describe:
- b. Does the Lead Agency use other factors in addition to income and family size to determine each family's co-payment? (Lead Agencies may not use price of care or amount of subsidy payment in determining co-payments).
- ☒ No.
- ☐ Yes.
- If yes, check and describe those additional factors below:
- i. ☐ Number of hours the child is in care. Describe:
- ii. ☐ Quality of care (as defined by the Lead Agency). Describe:
- iii. ☐ Other. Describe:
- c. Describe any other policies the Lead Agency uses in the calculation of family co-payment

to ensure it does not create a barrier to access. Check all that apply:

- i. ☐ Base co-payments on only a portion of the family's income. For instance, only consider the family income over the federal poverty level.
- ii. ☐ Base co-payments on the number of children in the family and reduce a portion of the co-payments as the number of children being served increases.
- iii. ☐ Other. Describe:

3.3 Waiving Family Co-payment

3.3.1 Waiving family co-payment

The Lead Agency may waive family contributions/co-payments for many families to lower their costs and maximize affordability for families. Lead Agencies have broad flexibility in determining for which families they will waive co-payments.

Does the Lead Agency waive family contributions/co-payments?

☐ No, the Lead Agency does not waive any family contributions/co-payments. (Skip to question 4.1.1.)

☒ Yes. If yes, identify and describe which family contributions/co-payments waived.

- i. ☐ Families with an income at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level for families of the same size.
- ii. ☐ Families with an income above 100% but at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level for families of the same size.
- iii. ☒ Families experiencing homelessness.
- iv. ☒ Families with children with disabilities.
- v. ☐ Families enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start.
- vi. ☒ Children in foster care or kinship care, or otherwise receiving or needing to receive protective services. Describe the policy: **Caregivers of children in foster care or in protective custody are not obligated to pay the copay since the CCAP subsidy percentage paid for children in foster care or protective custody is 100 percent of the maximum state rate (BESE Bulletin 139, Section 505 and 515).**
- vii. ☒ Families meeting other criteria established by the Lead Agency. Describe the policy: **The Lead Agency also waives copays for families that are in our most vulnerable populations and are deemed "categorically eligible." This is found in Bulletin 139, Section 507, "Certification for Categorically Eligible Households," and includes not only children in foster care but also families in the STEP Program. In addition, families participating in the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership do not have a copay.**

4 Parental Choice, Equal Access, Payment Rates, and Payment Practices

Core purposes of CCDF are to provide participating parents choice in their child care arrangements and provide their children with equal access to child care compared to those children not

participating in CCDF. CCDF requirements approach equal access and parental choice comprehensively to meet these foundational program goals. Providing access to a full range of child care providers helps ensure that families can choose a child care provider that meets their family's needs. CCDF payment rates and practices must be sufficient to support equal access by allowing child care providers to recruit and retain skilled staff, provide high-quality care, and operate in a sustainable way. Supply-building strategies are also essential.

This section addresses many of the CCDF provisions related to equal access, including access to the full range of providers, payment rates for providers, co-payments for families, payment practices, differential payment rates, and other strategies that support parental choice and access by helping to ensure that child care providers are available to serve children participating in CCDF.

In responding to questions in this section, OCC recognizes that each Lead Agency identifies and defines its own categories and types of care. OCC does not expect Lead Agencies to change their definitions to fit the CCDF-defined categories and types of care. For these questions, provide responses that closely match the CCDF categories of care.

4.1 Access to Full Range of Provider Options

Lead Agencies must provide parents a choice of providers and offer assistance with child care services through a child care certificate (or voucher) or with a child care provider that has a grant or contract for the provision of child care services. Lead Agencies are reminded that policies and procedures should not restrict parental access to any type or category of care or provider (e.g., center care, home care, in-home care, for-profit provider, non-profit provider, or faith-based provider, etc.).

4.1.1 Parent choice

- a. Identify any barriers to provider participation, including barriers related to payment rates and practices, (including for family child care and in-home providers), based on provider feedback, public comment, and reports to the Lead Agency: **In the most recent Market Rate Survey (conducted fall 2023) providers have expressed satisfaction with the state policy shift to enrollment-based payment, yet they identify the challenges and impact of delays in processing family applications for CCAP participation. Additionally, they identify some challenges when contacting the Department of Education. Despite CCAP maximum rates aligning with market rates, families struggle with increased charged rates, leading to substantial unpaid balances. Common challenges for providers related to operating their sites continue to include problems related to staffing, budgeting, and enrollment.**
- b. Does the Lead Agency offer child care assistance through vouchers or certificates?
☒ Yes.
☐ No.
- c. Does the Lead Agency offer child care assistance through grants or contracts?
☒ Yes.
☐ No.
- d. Describe how the parent is informed that the child care certificate allows the option to choose from a variety of child care categories, such as private, not-for-profit, faith-based

providers; centers; family child care homes; or in-home providers: **A variety of providers are available to families, including private child care centers (Type III early learning centers), not-for-profit centers, faith-based providers, school-based child care centers, family child care providers, in-home providers, and military child care centers (though there are no military child care centers in Louisiana currently). Parents may access the Louisiana School and Center Finder site (www.louisianaschools.com) to find eligible CCDF providers. Parents are sent a "Notice of Certification and Payments" once their case is determined eligible, which also notifies the family of freedom of parental choice of child care providers, as long as the chosen provider meets licensing and registration requirements.**

- e. Describe what information is included on the child care certificate: **The child care certificate states that "Under federal law, freedom of parental choice of child care providers is guaranteed, as long as the chosen provider meets certain licensing or registration requirements. Your provider may be a Type III provider, a Family Child Care Home Provider, an In-Home Provider (in the child's home), or a School Child Care Program. Regardless of the type of provider chosen, approval for this provider by the Department of Education does not imply any endorsement or recommendation of the provider."**

4.2 Assess Market Rates and Analyze the Cost of Child Care

To establish subsidy payment rates that ensure equal access, Lead Agencies must collect and analyze statistically valid and reliable data and have the option to conduct either a (1) market rate survey (MRS) reflecting variations in the price to parents of child care services by geographic area, type of provider, and age of child, or (2) an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology, such as a cost estimation model, which estimates the cost of care by incorporating both data and assumptions to estimate what expected costs would be incurred by child care providers and parents under different scenarios. All Lead Agencies must analyze the cost of providing child care through a narrow cost analysis or pre-approved alternative methodology.

Prior to conducting the MRS or pre-approved alternative, Lead Agencies must consult with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (designated or established pursuant to the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)) or similar coordinating body, local child care program administrators, local child care resource and referral agencies, and other appropriate entities; and organizations representing child care caregivers, teachers, and directors. Prior to conducting the MRS or pre-approved alternative methodology, Lead Agencies must consult with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (designated or established pursuant to the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)) or similar coordinating body, local child care program administrators, local child care resource and referral agencies, and other appropriate entities; and organizations representing child care caregivers, teachers, and directors.

Note: Any Lead Agency considering using an alternative methodology instead of a market rate survey to set payment rates, is required to submit a description of its proposed approach to OCC for pre-approval in advance of developing and conducting the alternative methodology. Advance approval is not required if the Lead Agency plans to implement both an MRS and an alternative methodology to set rates at a percentile of the market rate, but a Lead Agency conducting a limited market rate survey and using it to inform their cost model would need pre-approval for this approach. In its request for ACF pre-approval, a Lead Agency must provide details on the following elements of their proposed alternative methodology:

- Overall approach and rationale for using proposed methodology
- Description of stakeholder engagement
- Data collection timeframe (if applicable)
- Description of the data and assumptions included in the methodology, including how these elements will yield valid and reliable results from the model
- Description of how the methodology will capture the universe of providers, and reflect variations by provider type, age of children, geographic location, and quality

4.2.1 Completion of the market rate survey or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology

Did the Lead Agency conduct a statistically valid and reliable MRS or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology to meet the CCDF requirements to assess child care prices and/or costs and determine payment rates? Check only one based on which methodology was used to determine your payment rates.

- a. ☒ Market rate survey.
- i. When were the data gathered (provide a date range; for instance, September – December 2023)? **The 2023 Market Rate Survey was distributed to all active child care providers (Type I centers, Type II centers, Type III centers, School-based Child Care, Family Child Care Providers, and In-home Child Care) by email on October 13, 2023. The survey closed on November 20, 2023.**
- b. ☐ ACF pre-approved alternative methodology.
- i. ☐ The alternative methodology was completed.
- ii. ☐ The alternative methodology is in process.

If the alternative methodology was completed:

When were the data gathered and when was the study completed?

Describe any major differences between the pre-approved methodology and the final methodology used to inform payment rates. Include any major changes to stakeholder engagement, data, assumptions or proposed scenarios.

If the alternative methodology is in progress:

Provide a status on the alternative methodology and timeline (i.e., dates when the alternative methodology activities will be conducted, any completed steps to date, anticipated date of completion, and expected date new rates will be in effect using the alternative methodology).

- c. Consultation on data collection methodology.

Describe when and how the Lead Agency engaged the following partners and how the consultation informed the development and execution of the MRS or alternative methodology, as appropriate.

- iii. State Advisory Council or similar coordinating body: **Information about the Market Rate Survey was shared in the Lead Agency's monthly Early Childhood newsletter, which is disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders and was also shared in**

meetings with some Advisory Council members.

- iv. Local child care program administrators: **The Lead Agency and Lead Agency contractor incorporated input from provider-focused surveys, small-group discussions, and one-on-one conversations with diverse providers operating different types of businesses in various environments and contexts statewide.**
 - v. Local child care resource and referral agencies: **Information about the Market Rate Survey was shared in the Lead Agency's monthly Early Childhood newsletter, which is disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders and to which child care resource and referral agencies subscribe.**
 - vi. Organizations representing child care caregivers, teachers, and directors from all settings and serving all ages: **Direct conversations with child care providers, including teachers and directors, from across the state and who operate different types of businesses.**
 - vii. Other. Describe: **(not applicable)**
- d. An MRS must be statistically valid and reliable.

An MRS can use administrative data, such as child care resource and referral data, if it is representative of the market. Please provide the following information about the market rate survey:

- i. When was the market rate survey completed? **11/20/2023**
- ii. What was the time period for collecting the information (e.g., all of the prices in the survey are collected within a three-month time period)? **The Market Rate Survey was distributed on October 13, 2023, and closed on November 20, 2023.**
- iii. Describe how it represented the child care market, including what types of providers were included in the survey: **The 2023 Market Rate Survey was distributed to all active child care providers (Type I centers, Type II centers, Type III centers, School-based Child Care, Family Child Care Providers, and In-home Child Care). In total, responses were received from at least 50% of registered providers in each provider type, with the exception of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership sites, which do not generally charge rates comparable with the child care market. In total, the survey was completed by 62.7% of active child care providers in the state.**

A breakdown of the respondents and response rate by provider type is as follows: 121 of 204 Type I center (non-CCDF) providers responded to the survey (a 59.3% response rate). 85 of 166 Type II center (non-CCDF) providers responded to the survey (a 51.2% response rate). 685 of 1,016 Type III center (CCDF) providers responded to the survey (a 67.4% response rate). 23 of 149 Type III Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership center providers responded to the survey (a 15.4% response rate). 210 of 258 Family Child Care providers responded to the survey (a 81.4% response rate). 2 of 3 In-Home Child Care providers responded to the survey (a 66.7% response rate).

- iv. What databases are used in the survey? Are they from multiple sources, including licensing, resource and referral, and the subsidy program? **Louisiana uses a single**

database to collect data for its child care, which includes licensing, background checks, and quality ratings for all providers, as well as resource utilization. Invitations to participate in the Market Rate Survey were distributed to all active providers, including Type I centers, Type II centers, Type III centers, School-based Child Care, Family Child Care Providers, and In-home Child Care providers, who were registered in the state system as active providers as of October 13, 2023.

- v. How does the survey use good data collection procedures, regardless of the method for collection (mail, telephone, or web-based survey)? **The survey team implemented a comprehensive data collection process throughout the survey period, which involved distributing the survey via email, sending additional reminder emails, mailing postcards with direct access to the online survey, and conducting a call-out campaign to emphasize the survey's importance to providers. Additionally, brief blurbs containing survey information were included in recurring newsletters and webinars.**
- vi. What is the percent of licensed or regulated child care centers responding to the survey? **59.50**
- vii. What is the percent of licensed or regulated family child care homes responding to the survey? **81.40**
- viii. Describe if the survey conducted in any languages other than English: **The survey was conducted in English.**
- ix. Describe if data were analyzed in a manner to determine price of care per child: **Yes. Respondents provided charged rates per child, by child age.**
- x. Describe if data were analyzed from a sample of providers and if so, how the sample was weighted: **No, surveys were distributed to all registered providers and used a convenience sampling method. No weighting was used.**
- e. Price variations reflected.
The market rate survey data or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology data must reflect variations in child care prices or cost of child care services in specific categories.
 - i. Describe how the market rate survey or pre-approved alternative methodology reflected variation in geographic area (e.g., county, region, urban, rural). Include information on whether parts of the State or Territory were not represented by respondents and include information on how prices or costs could be linked to local geographic areas. **Respondents provided their addresses, including city and zip code. These data were matched back to identify variation in regional rates based on regional organization used by the Lead Agency across programs. All regions across the state are represented in the survey. Prices were also examined for differences in providers operating in rural vs. urban settings, using the federal Rural Education Achievement Program designations, which are used by the Lead Agency to determine a parish's classification as rural or suburban/urban.**
 - ii. Describe how the market rate survey or pre-approved alternative methodology reflected variation in type of provider (e.g., licensed providers, license-exempt providers, center-based providers, family child care home providers, home based

providers). **Respondents were required to provide their provider type. Survey responses and pricing were reported out by provider type, highlighting variation in pricing by provider type.**

- iii. Describe how the market rate survey or pre-approved alternative methodology reflected age of child (e.g., infant, toddler, preschool, school-age): **Respondents were required to provide their charged cost by age of the child. Survey responses and pricing were reported out by child age, highlighting variation in pricing by child's age.**
- iv. Describe any other key variations examined by the market rate survey or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology, such as quality level: **The analysis following the market rate survey examined additional factors such as quality level.**

4.2.2 Cost analysis

If a Lead Agency does not complete a cost-based pre-approved alternative methodology, they must analyze the cost of providing child care services through a narrow cost analysis. A narrow cost analysis is a study of what it costs providers to deliver child care at two or more levels of quality: (1) a base level of quality that meets health, safety, staffing, and quality requirements, and (2) one or more higher levels of quality as defined by the Lead Agency. The narrow cost analysis must estimate costs by levels of quality; include relevant variation by provider type, child's age, or location; and analyze the gaps between estimated costs and payment rates to inform payment rate setting. Lead agencies are not required to complete a separate narrow cost analysis if their pre-approved alternative methodology addresses all of the components required in the narrow cost analysis.

Describe how the Lead Agency analyzed the cost of child care through a narrow cost analysis or pre-approved alternative methodology for the FFY 2025–2027 CCDF Plan, including:

- a. How did the Lead Agency conduct a narrow cost analysis (e.g., a cost model, a cost study, existing data or data from the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator)? **This analysis used a blended approach: a cost model, which was informed by a limited cost survey, which was administered as part of the Market Rate Survey.**
- b. In the Lead Agency's analysis, were there any relevant variations by geographic location, category of provider, or age of child? **Yes, variations were identified by geographic location, category of provider, and age of the child.**
- c. What assumptions and data did the Lead Agency use to determine the cost of care at the base level of quality (e.g., ratios, group size, staff compensations, staff training, etc.)? **Where possible, actual data from providers were used as inputs for the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator (PCQC). In all other instances, the state-specific PCQC default values were used. For home-based providers, average hourly salary was utilized, assuming a 10-hour day, five days a week. This was the same assumption used for weekly tuition values. PCQC default values for Louisiana were used to populate the mandatory benefits.**
- d. How does the Lead Agency define higher quality and what assumptions and data did the Lead Agency use to determine cost at higher levels of quality (e.g., ratio, group size, staffing levels, staff compensation, professional development requirements)? A Lead Agency can use a quality improvement system or other system of quality indicators (e.g., accreditation, pre-Kindergarten standards, Head Start Program Performance Standards, or

State-defined quality measures). Louisiana implements a statewide early childhood quality rating and improvement system, categorizing providers into performance ratings ranging from **“Approaching Proficient”** to **“Excellent.”** These ratings are based on multiple factors that contribute to effective teacher:child interactions. Upon completion of the survey, responses were aligned with site-level performance ratings to pinpoint variations.

- e. What is the gap between cost and price, and how did the Lead Agency consider this while setting payment rates? Did the Lead Agency target any rate increases where gaps were the largest or develop any long-term plans to increase rates based on this information? **The difference between the 75th percentile of charged rate and cost of care are as follows for each age group in Type III center-based care:**
Infants: 75th percentile charged rate = \$46.00; Cost of Care = \$48.75; Difference = \$2.75
Toddlers: 75th percentile charged rate = \$42.00; Cost of Care = \$31.33; Difference = (\$10.67)
3 Year Old Preschool: 75th percentile charged rate = \$37.00; Cost of Care = \$29.46; Difference = (\$7.54)
4 Year Old Preschool: 75th percentile charged rate = \$36.00; Cost of Care = \$30.55; Difference = (\$5.45)
School-aged: 75th percentile charged rate = \$35.00; Cost of Care = \$24.23; Difference = (\$10.77)
The Lead Agency has not made any rate increases since the completion of the 2023 Market Rate Survey; the Lead Agency last made rate increases in February 2022, based off of information shared by providers in their ARPA Stabilization Grant applications.

4.2.3 Publicly available report on the cost and price of child care

The Lead Agency must prepare a detailed report containing the results of the MRS or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology and include the Narrow Cost Analysis if an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology was not conducted.

The Lead Agency must make this report widely available no later than 30 days after completion of the report, including posting the results on the Lead Agency website. The Lead Agency must describe in the detailed report how the Lead Agency took into consideration the views and comments of the public or stakeholders prior to conducting the MRS or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology.

a. Describe how the Lead Agency made the results of the market rate survey or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology report widely available to the public by responding to the questions below.

- i. Provide the date the report was completed: **6/26/2024**
- ii. Provide the date the report containing results was made widely available (no later than 30 days after the completion of the report): **7/26/2024**
- iii. Provide a link to the website where the report is posted and describe any other strategies the Lead Agency uses to make the detailed report widely available: **<https://louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/early-childhood-policy-guidance>**
- iv. Describe how the Lead Agency considered partner views and comments in the detailed report. Responses should include which partners were engaged and how partner input influenced the market rate survey or alternative methodology: **The**

2023 Market Rate Survey tool was developed from a series of conversations that took place in recurring check-in meetings with partners such as providers, state advocates, and national consulting experts, before and after the truer cost of care analysis the Lead Agency conducted with data received from ARPA Stabilization Grant provider applications. These discussions and feedback influenced which questions were included in the Market Rate Survey. The Lead Agency will consider comments in the detailed report when evaluating future rate increases and other policy and procedure changes to better support the needs of EC providers.

4.3 Adequate Payment Rates

The Lead Agency must set CCDF subsidy payment rates in accordance with the results of the current MRS or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology and at a level to ensure equal access for eligible families to child care services comparable with those provided to families not receiving CCDF assistance. Lead Agencies are also required to provide a summary of data and facts to demonstrate how payment rates ensure equal access, which means the Lead Agency must also consider the costs of base level care and higher quality care as part of its rate setting. Finally, the Lead Agency must re-evaluate its payment rates at least every 3 years.

The ages and types of care listed in the base payment rate tables are meant to provide a snapshot of the categories of rates and are not intended to be comprehensive of all categories that might exist or to reflect the terms used by the Lead Agency for particular ages. If rates are not statewide, please provide all variations of payment rates when reporting base payment rates below.

Base rates are the lowest, foundational rates before any differentials are added (e.g., for higher quality or other purposes) and must be sufficient to ensure that minimum health, safety, quality, and staffing requirements are covered. These are the rates that will be used to determine compliance with equal access requirements.

4.3.1 Payment rates

- a. Are the payment rates that the Lead Agency is reporting in 4.3.2 set statewide by the Lead Agency?
☒ Yes.
 - i. If yes, check if the Lead Agency:
 - ☒ Sets the same payment rates for the entire State or Territory.
 - ☐ Sets different payment rates for different regions in the State or Territory.
 - ☐ No.
 - ii. If no, identify how many jurisdictions set their own payment rates:
- b. Provide the date the current payment rates became effective (i.e., date of last payment rate update based on most recent MRS or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology as reported in 4.2.1). **2/1/2022**
- c. If the Lead Agency does not publish weekly rates, then how were the rates reported in 4.3.2 or 4.3.3 calculated (e.g., were daily rates multiplied by 5 or monthly rates divided by 4.3)? **The rates reported are based on the daily rates multiplied by 5.**

4.3.2 Base payment rates

- a. Provide the base payment rates in the tables below. If the Lead Agency completed a market rate survey (MRS), provide the percentiles based on the most recent MRS for the identified categories. If the Lead Agency sets different payment rates for different regions in the State or Territory (and checked 4.3.1a ii), provide the rates for the most populous region as well as the region with payment rates set at the lowest percentile. Percentiles are not required if the Lead Agency also conducted an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology but must be reported if the Lead Agency conducted an MRS only.

The preamble to the 2016 final rule states that a benchmark for adequate payment rates is the 75th percentile of the most recent MRS. The 75th percentile benchmark applies to the base rates. The 75th percentile is the number separating the lowest 75 percent of rates from the highest 25 percent. Setting rates at the 75th percentile, while not a requirement, would ensure that eligible families can afford three out of four child care providers. In addition to reporting the 75th percentile in the tables below, the Lead Agency must also report the 50th percentile and 60th percentile for each identified category.

If the Lead Agency conducted an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology, provide the estimated cost of care for the identified categories, as well as the percentage of the cost of care covered by the established payment rate. If the Lead Agency indicated it sets different payment rates for different regions in the State or Territory in 4.3.1.a, provide the estimated cost of care and the percentage of the cost of care covered by the established payment rate for the most populous region as well as the region with rates established at the lowest percent of the cost of care.

For each identified category below, provide the percentage of providers who are receiving the base rate without any add-ons or differential payments.

Provide the full-time weekly base payment rates in the table below. If weekly payment rates are not published, then the Lead Agency will need to calculate its equivalent.

- i. Table 1: Complete if rates are set statewide. If rates are not set statewide, provide rates for most populous region. Percentiles are not required if the Lead Agency also conducted an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology but must be reported if the Lead Agency conducted an MRS only.

Care Type	Base payment rate (specify unit, e.g., per day, per week, per month)	% of providers receiving Base rate	Full-Time Weekly Base Payment Rate	What is the percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the 50th percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the 60th percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the 75th percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the estimated cost of care? (Alternative Methodology)	What percent of the estimated cost of care is the rate?
Center Care for Infants (6 months)	68.00 Per Day	100.00	340.00	90.00	37.00	40.00	46.00		
Family Child Care for Infants (6 months)	61.00 Per Day	100.00	305.00	85.00	32.00	35.20	50.00		
Center Care for Toddlers (18 months)	42.00 Per Day	100.00	210.00	75.00	35.00	37.00	42.00		
Family Child Care for Toddlers (18 months)	42.00 Per Day	100.00	210.00	80.00	31.00	35.00	41.84		
Center Care for Preschoolers (4 years)	31.50 Per Day	100.00	157.50	44.00	32.00	33.00	36.00		
Family Child Care for Preschoolers (4 years)	29.00 Per Day	100.00	145.00	50.00	29.00	30.73	35.00		
Center Care for School-Age (6 years)	31.50 Per Day	100.00	157.50	60.00	30.00	31.50	35.00		
Family Child Care for School-Age (6 years)	29.00 Per Day	100.00	145.00	50.00	29.00	30.00	35.00		

ii. Table 2: Do not complete if rates are set statewide. If rates are not set statewide, provide rates for region with payment rates set at the lowest percentile. Percentiles are not required if the Lead Agency also conducted an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology but must be reported if the Lead Agency conducted an MRS only.

Care Type	Base payment rate (specify unit, e.g., per day, per week, per month)	% of providers receiving Base rate	Full-Time Weekly Base Payment Rate	What is the percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the 50th percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the 60th percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the 75th percentile of the rate? (MRS)	What is the estimated cost of care? (Alternative Methodology)	What percent of the estimated cost of care is the rate?
Center Care for Infants (6 months)									
Family Child Care for Infants (6 months)									
Center Care for Toddlers (18 months)									
Family Child Care for Toddlers (18 months)									
Center Care for Preschoolers (4 years)									
Family Child Care for Preschoolers (4 years)									
Center Care for School-Age (6 years)									
Family Child Care for School-Age (6 years)									

- b. Does the Lead Agency certify that the percentiles reported in the table above are calculated based on their most recent MRS or ACF pre-approved Alternative Methodology?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, what is the year of the MRS or ACF pre-approved alternative methodology that the Lead Agency used? What was the reason for not using the most recent MRS or

ACF pre-approved alternative methodology? Describe:

4.3.3 Tiered rates, differential rates, and add-ons

Lead Agencies may establish tiered rates, differential rates, or add-ons on top of their base rates as a way to increase payment rates for targeted needs (e.g., a higher rate for serving children with special needs).

- a. Does the Lead Agency provide any rate add-ons above the base rate?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe the add-ons, including what they are, who is eligible to receive the add-ons, and how often are they paid:

☒ No.

- b. Has the Lead Agency chosen to implement tiered reimbursement or differential rates?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. Tiered or differential rates are not implemented.

If yes, identify below any tiered or differential rates, and, at a minimum, indicate the process and basis used for determining the tiered rates, including if the rates were based on the MRS or an ACF pre-approved alternative methodology. Check and describe all that apply:

- i. ☐ Differential rate for non-traditional hours. Describe:

- ii. ☒ Differential rate for children with special needs, as defined by the Lead Agency. Describe: **The Lead Agency pays a differential rate for children requiring special needs care. According to BESE Bulletin 139, Special Needs Child Care is defined as the following: "for the purpose of CCAP daily rates, child care for a child through age 17 who has a current individualized family services plan (IFSP) or individual education plan (IEP) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or who receives supplemental security income (SSI)." Incentive payments up to 26 percent higher than the regular rates can be allowed for special needs child care.**

- iii. ☐ Differential rate for infants and toddlers. Note: Do not check if the Lead Agency has a different base rate for infants/toddlers with no separate bonus or add-on. Describe:

- iv. ☐ Differential rate for school-age programs. Note: Do not check if the Lead Agency has a different base rate for school-age children with no separate bonus or add-on. Describe:

- v. ☒ Differential rate for higher quality, as defined by the Lead Agency. Describe: **The CCDF Lead Agency offers quarterly CCAP bonus payments to child care sites based on their quality rating from their Performance Profile, as a way to incentivize increased quality. Bonus payments are calculated based on a percentage of CCAP payments from each quarter. Sites with a higher quality rating receive a bonus based on a greater percentage of their CCAP payments. Additionally, sites with higher quality ratings are able to qualify for increased provider School Readiness Tax Credits. The size of the credit is based on the site's star rating and the number of children being served who are in the Child Care**

Assistance Program (CCAP) or are foster children in the custody of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The credit is NOT dependent on whether the site owes income taxes and is available for both for-profit and non-profit centers.

5 star rating = \$1,500 tax credit for site per child
4 star rating = \$1,250 tax credit for site per child
3 star rating = \$1,000 tax credit for site per child
2 star rating = \$750 tax credit for site per child
1 star rating = \$0 tax credit for site per child

Example: If ABC child care has earned three stars and serves 10 eligible children, then that provider is eligible for a refundable Provider SRTC of up to 10 children x \$1,000 per child = \$10,000.

- vi. ☒ Other differential rates or tiered rates. For example, differential rates for geographic area or for type of provider. Describe: **Rates are differentiated based on settings and age of children served as well. For example, rates vary for Type III Early Learning Centers, School Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Providers, In-Home Providers, and Military Child Care Centers. Moreover, there is a different base rate for infants and toddlers, for both regular care and special needs and a different base rate for 3 year olds, for both regular care and special needs. (See BESE Bulletin 139 Section 515 for rates.)**
- vii. If applicable, describe any additional add-on rates that you have besides those identified above.

Does the Lead Agency reduce provider payments if the price the provider charges to private-pay families not participating in CCDF is below the Lead Agency's established payment rate?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe:

☒ No.

4.3.4 Establishing payment rates

Describe how the Lead Agency established payment rates:

- a. What was the Lead Agency's methodology or process for setting the rates or how did the Lead Agency use their data to set rates? **The Lead Agency most recently established payment rates in February 2022, based off of the prior Market Rate Survey as well as data shared by providers in their ARPA Stabilization Grant applications. That data was analyzed to arrive at an estimated average cost per day for serving children at different age levels (infant, toddler, 3 year old, 4 year old, 5 year old). Proposed rates for three age groups (infants, toddlers and age 3+ children) were developed for publicly-funded centers and Family Child Care homes. The proposed rates reflected fairly large increases for infants, moderate increases for toddlers, and more modest increases for age 3+ children. In an effort to arrive at the most true cost of care, several methods of data analysis were used: provider weighting, taking input from providers about how costs are allocated across ages; provider weighting in regard to center size, looking for strong patterns; and regression analysis, drawing patterns from the data using a defined cost structure.**

The Lead Agency will use data from the 2023 Market Rate Survey to re-evaluate its current payment rates.

- b. How did the Lead Agency determine that the rates are adequate to meet health, safety, quality, and staffing requirements under CCDF? **By increasing the CCAP rates in February 2022 to at least the 75th percentile (based on the 2021 Louisiana Early Childhood Subsidy Cost Analysis), a family could choose 3 out of 4 child care providers, rather than only 1 out of 4 providers if paid at the 25th percentile. This reduced/reduces the gap that families need to pay between what the provider charges and what the state pays, therefore making child care more affordable to the most vulnerable families. The state pays the state rate regardless of the amount the provider charges.**
- c. How did the Lead Agency use the cost of care, either from the narrow cost analysis or the ACF pre-approved alternative methodology to inform rate setting, including how using the cost of care promotes the stabilization of child care providers? **The Lead Agency most recently established payment rates in February 2022 based off of the prior Market Rate Survey as well as data shared by providers in their ARPA Stabilization Grant applications regarding their monthly operating expenses. That data was analyzed to arrive at an estimated average cost per day for serving children at different age levels (infant, toddler, 3 year old, 4 year old, 5 year old). Proposed rates for three age groups (infants, toddlers and age 3+ children) were developed for publicly-funded centers and Family Child Care homes. The proposed rates reflected fairly large increases for infants, moderate increases for toddlers, and more modest increases for age 3+ children, to promote the stabilization of child care providers.**
- d. How did the Lead Agency account for the cost of higher quality while setting payment rates? **Outside of the CCAP payment rates themselves, the Lead Agency accounts for the cost of higher quality by providing additional payment incentives and additional no-cost quality supports. The CCDF Lead Agency offers quarterly CCAP bonus payments to child care sites based on their quality rating from their Performance Profile as a way to incentivize increased quality. Bonus payments are calculated based on a percentage of CCAP payments from each quarter. Sites with a higher quality rating receive a bonus based on a greater percentage of their CCAP payments. Additionally, sites with higher quality ratings are able to qualify for increased School Readiness Tax Credits, both for family tax credits and for provider tax credits. In addition, the Lead Agency provides funding for CCR&R training, CLASS observations, child assessment, teacher scholarships, curriculum, etc.**
- e. Identify and describe any additional facts (not covered in responses to 4.3.1 – 4.3.3) that the Lead Agency considered in determining its payment rates to ensure equal access. **(not applicable)**

4.4 Payment Practices to Providers

Lead Agencies must use subsidy payment practices that reflect practices that are generally accepted in the private pay child care market. The Lead Agency must ensure timeliness of payment to child care providers by paying in advance or at the beginning of delivery of child care services. Lead Agencies must also support the fixed cost of child care services based on paying by

the child's authorized enrollment, or if impracticable, an alternative approach that will not undermine the stability of child care programs as justified and approved through this Plan.

Lead Agencies must also (1) pay providers based on established part-time or full-time rates rather than paying for hours of service or smaller increments of time, and (2) pay for reasonable, mandatory registration fees that the provider charges to private-paying parents. These policies apply to all provider types unless the Lead Agency can demonstrate that in limited circumstances the policies would not be considered generally-accepted payment practices.

In addition, Lead Agencies must ensure that child care providers receive payment for any services in accordance with a payment agreement or an authorization for services, ensure that child care providers receive prompt notice of changes to a family's eligibility status that could impact payment, and have timely appeal and resolution processes for any payment inaccuracies and disputes.

4.4.1 Prospective and enrollment-based payment practices

Lead Agencies must use payment practices for all CCDF child care providers that reflect generally-accepted payment practices of providers serving private-pay families, including paying providers in advance or at the beginning of the delivery of child care services and paying based on a child's authorized enrollment or an alternative approach for which the Lead Agency must demonstrate paying for a child's authorized enrollment is not practicable and it will not undermine the stability of child care programs. Lead Agencies may only use alternate approaches for subsets of provider types if they can demonstrate that prospective payments and authorized enrollment-based payment are not generally-accepted for a type of child care setting. Describe the Lead Agency payment practices for all CCDF child care providers:

- a. Does the Lead Agency pay all provider types prospectively (i.e., in advance of or at the beginning of the delivery of child care services)?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe:

☒ No, it is not a generally-accepted payment practice for each provider type. If no, describe the provider type not paid prospectively and the data demonstrating it is not a generally-accepted payment practice for that provider type, and describe the Lead Agency's payment practice that ensures timely payment for that provider type: **At this time the Lead Agency is requesting a temporary waiver for meeting this provision, as the Department works to update systems and processes. Currently all system-automated weekly payments, which are the vast majority of payments, are made within 14 days of services.**

- b. Does the Lead Agency pay based on authorized enrollment for all provider types?

☒ Yes. The Lead Agency pays all providers by authorized enrollment and payment is not altered based on a child's attendance or the number of absences a child has.

☐ No, it is not a generally-accepted practice for each provider type. If no, describe the provider types not paid by authorized enrollment, including the data showing it is not a generally-accepted payment practice for that provider type, and describe how the payment policy accounts for fixed costs:

☐ It is impracticable. Describe provider type(s) for which it is impracticable, why it is impracticable, and the alternative approach the Lead Agency uses to delink provider

payments from occasional absences, including evidence that the alternative approach will not undermine the stability of child care programs, and thereby accounts for fixed costs:

4.4.2 Other payment practices

Lead Agencies must (1) pay providers based on established part-time or full-time rates rather than paying for hours of service or smaller increments of time, and (2) pay for reasonable, mandatory registration fees that the provider charges to private-paying parents, unless the Lead Agency provides evidence that such practices are not generally-accepted for providers caring for children not participating in CCDF in its State or Territory.

- a. Does the Lead Agency pay all providers on a part-time or full-time basis (rather than paying for hours of service or smaller increments of time)?
- ☒ Yes.
- ☐ No. If no, describe the policies or procedures that are different than paying on a part-time or full-time basis and the Lead Agency's rationale for not paying on a part-time or full-time basis:
- b. Does the Lead Agency pay for reasonable mandatory registration fees that the provider charges to private-paying parents?
- ☒ Yes. If yes, identify the fees the Lead Agency pays for: **The Lead Agency pays reasonable registration fees on behalf of all CCAP households (in accordance with BESE Bulletin 139 Section 515). Allowable registration fees are based on the amount recorded in the provider certification agreement or the most current market rate survey, whichever is lower, and shall not exceed the state maximum. Payments for registration fees will be made to providers on behalf of all households once per certification period.**
- ☐ No. If no, identify the data and how data were collected to show that paying for fees is not a generally-accepted payment practice:
- c. Describe how the Lead Agency ensures that providers are paid in accordance with a written payment agreement or an authorization for services that includes, at a minimum, information regarding provider payment policies, including rates, schedules, any fees charged to providers, and the dispute-resolution process: **The Lead Agency has a written agreement with each CCAP provider that includes provisions on rates, copayment requirements, payments to providers, and audits and states that "Payment to the Provider is based on the authorized period that child care services are rendered for an eligible child needing care. CCAP payments are disbursed based on enrollment. Providers will receive notification in advance if this mode of payment changes. Also, Provider shall not charge the caregiver of a CCAP eligible child, including foster care, any more than the maximum rate charged to any caregiver who is paying privately for the same child care service. The Department will notify providers via email, newsletter, or webinar, of any proposed rate changes." CCAP providers also have the following tools to review and research payments and understand payment practices:**
- KinderConnect Provider Portal (has available provider reports and actual child attendance activity, and links to provider manuals and guides are available to print and review)**
- Provider Remittance Advice**
- Provider Agreement**
- Louisiana Believes (LDOE website) "Publicly-Funded" tab**

LDOE webinars and trainings for providers

These tools help providers know which days the Department will pay for, the remittance amount, what has already been paid, and the provider agreement, for example.

The Lead Agency also researches all CCAP payment inquiries and provides access to providers to address conflicts and issues through the Provider Help Desk.

- d. Describe how the Lead Agency provides prompt notice to providers regarding any changes to the family's eligibility status that could impact payments, and such a notice is sent no later than the day that the Lead Agency becomes aware that such a change will occur: **A provider "Notice of Certification" and "Notice of Termination" of services is sent to providers any time a case action is made or changes are made that will affect the amount paid to the provider. Notices are required to be sent at the time the action is taken.**
- e. Describe the Lead Agency's timely appeal and resolution process for payment inaccuracies and disputes: **CCAP analysts, supervisors, and other Lead Agency staff guide payment inquiries directly to the Provider Help Desk or to the Regional Quality Control Program Specialist.**
Upon receiving notification of a payment issue or complaint, the Child Care Assistance Program specialist addresses the issue with the provider via the Provider Ticket System, phone, email, and/or letter correspondence.
If the issue cannot be resolved upon initial contact, an appointment is created for the provider and the designated program specialist to ensure that the issue is properly resolved. Once all information regarding the payment issue is received, the program specialist will review the case by researching the documents and correspondence surrounding the case. Once all research has been completed and a solution has been reached, the provider will be contacted and informed of the payment decision.
- f. Other. Describe any other payment practices established by the Lead Agency: **The Department reviews discrepancies that occurred typically within 30 days of the Department's receipt of the notice of discrepancy.**

4.4.3 Payment practices and parent choice

How do the Lead Agency's payment practices facilitate provider participation in all categories of care? **The Lead Agency increased rates in 2022 to a minimum of the 75th percentile from the 2021 Market Rate Survey and additional narrow cost analysis and changed payment practices (first in the pandemic, in 2020, and then in bulletin in 2022) so that the provider receives the maximum allowable rate regardless of the amount charged by the provider, to ensure that payment rates are desirable. Child Care Assistance Program Bonus Payments are also provided to highly-rated providers participating in the quality improvement system, further incentivizing providers' commitment to serving children in the subsidy program and to quality. The Lead Agency pays based on enrollment, at the state's maximum rate, to a variety of providers that are available to families, including Type III Early Learning Centers, School Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Providers, In-Home Providers, and Military Child Care Centers.**

4.5 Supply Building

Building a supply of high-quality child care that meets the needs and preferences of parents participating in CCDF is necessary to meet CCDF's core purposes. Lead Agencies must support parent choice by providing some portion of direct services via grants or contracts, including at a minimum for children in underserved geographic areas, infants and toddlers, and children with disabilities.

4.5.1 Child care services available through grants or contracts

Does the Lead Agency provide direct child care services through grants or contracts for child care slots?

☐ Yes, statewide. Describe how the Lead Agency ensures that parents who enroll with a provider who has a grant or contract have choices when selecting a provider:

☒ Yes, in some jurisdictions, but not statewide. Describe how many jurisdictions use grants or contracts for child care slots and how the Lead Agency ensures that parents who enroll with a provider who has a grant or contract have choices when selecting a provider: **To help build the supply of infant and toddler care, the Lead Agency offers infant, toddler, and three-year-old contracted care. These contracts have been offered statewide, though some parishes (approximately 40%) have not yet accepted these contracted seats. Communities are not required to contract for direct service slots. Although not all parishes have yet chosen to implement contracts, all parishes in the state have been offered the opportunity to request contracts. The Lead Agency will be working with those parishes who have not yet implemented contracts to build capacity and opportunity for future contracts.**

With children being served through contracted seats in both urban and rural areas across the geographic regions of the state, the contracted seat program allows the Lead Agency to ensure that families, including in rural areas, have access to child care assistance. CCDF-certified providers statewide are eligible to request contracts, and contracts are awarded in order to build supply in underserved geographic areas and for underserved groups of children. Parents are guaranteed choices when selecting a provider because parents may be awarded a voucher seat or a contracted seat: parents who wish to select a CCDF provider who is not receiving a contracted seat may apply for the CCAP voucher program instead. The Lead Agency will also be working with all parishes to ensure the full expansion of contracted seats statewide.

☐ No. If no, describe any Lead Agency plans to provide direct child care services through grants and contracts for child care slots:

If no, skip to question 4.5.2.

- i. If yes, identify the populations of children served through grants or contracts for child care slots (check all that apply). For each population selected, identify the number of slots allocated through grants or contracts for direct service of children receiving CCDF.

☒ Children with disabilities. Number of slots allocated through grants or contracts: **Louisiana will be requesting a waiver in order to determine how to implement grants/contracts for children with disabilities, since young children with disabilities are already categorically eligible to receive services, even when there is a waitlist.**

☒ Infants and toddlers. Number of slots allocated through grants or contracts: **The Lead Agency is serving approximately 2500 infants and toddlers through grant/contract slots. The number of infants and toddlers served may overlap with the number of children in underserved areas.**

☒ Children in underserved geographic areas. Number of slots allocated through grants or contracts: **The Lead Agency is serving approximately 900 children in underserved geographic (rural) areas through grant/contract slots. The number of infants and toddlers served may overlap with the number of children in underserved (rural) areas.**

☐ Children needing non-traditional hour care. Number of slots allocated through grants or contracts:

☐ School-age children. Number of slots allocated through grants or contracts:

☐ Children experiencing homelessness. Number of slots allocated through grants or contracts:

☒ Children in urban areas. Percent of CCDF children served in an average month: **The Lead Agency is serving approximately 2500 children in urban areas through grant/contract slots. The number of infants and toddlers served may overlap with the number of children in urban areas.**

☒ Children in rural areas. Percent of CCDF children served in an average month: **The Lead Agency is serving approximately 900 children in underserved geographic (rural) areas through grant/contract slots. The number of infants and toddlers served may overlap with the number of children in rural areas.**

☐ Other populations. If checked, describe:

- ii. If yes, how are rates for slots funded by grants and contracts determined by the Lead Agency? **Rates for the child care assistance program's contracted slots are equivalent to the rates for the program's certificate/voucher slots (both of which use information obtained through the Market Rate Survey and cost analysis).**

4.5.2 Care in the child's home (in-home care)

The Lead Agency must allow for in-home care (i.e., care provided in the child's own home) but may limit its use.

Will the Lead Agency limit the use of in-home care in any way?

☒ Yes.

☐ No.

If yes, what limits will the Lead Agency set on the use of in-home care? Check all that apply.

- i. ☐ Restricted based on the minimum number of children in the care of the in-home provider to meet the Fair Labor Standards Act (minimum wage) requirements. Describe:
- ii. ☒ Restricted based on the in-home provider meeting a minimum age

requirement. Describe: **To be certified as a CCAP in-home provider, the applicant must be at least 18 years old and provide verification of identity.**

- iii. ☐ Restricted based on the hours of care (i.e., certain number of hours, non-traditional work hours). Describe:
- iv. ☒ Restricted to care by relatives. (A relative provider must be at least 18 years of age based on the definition of eligible child care provider.) Describe: **An in-home provider renders child care services to only eligible children who are, by marriage, blood relationship, or court decree, the grandchild, great-grandchild, siblings (if such provider lives in separate residence), niece, or nephew of such provider, and complies with any applicable requirements that govern child care provided by the relative involved.**
- v. ☐ Restricted to care for children with special needs or a medical condition. Describe:
- vi. ☐ Restricted to in-home providers that meet additional health and safety requirements beyond those required by CCDF. Describe:
- vii. ☐ Other. Describe:

4.5.3 Shortages in the supply of child care

Lead Agencies must identify shortages in the supply of child care providers that meet parents' needs and preferences.

What child care shortages has the Lead Agency identified in the State or Territory, and what is the plan to address the child care shortages?

- a. In infant and toddler programs:
 - i. Data sources used to identify shortages: **A statewide child count, in which community network lead agencies report all publicly-funded children enrolled on October 1 and February 1 across all program types (e.g, child care, schools, and Head Start/Early Head Start) and funding sources (e.g., Head Start, Title I, state PreK, local funding, CCAP, etc.). We compare that child count (which is conducted twice each year) to our economically-disadvantaged cohort numbers, to identify the gap in eligible children being served...and we report out on both the number served, the total number in the eligible cohort, and the gap of unserved children at least annually, publicly.**
 - ii. Method of tracking progress: **The child count is conducted twice per year for all publicly-funded children enrolled on October 1 and February 1 across all program types (e.g, child care, schools, and Head Start/Early Head Start) and funding sources (e.g., Head Start, Title I, state PreK, local funding, CCAP, etc.). The Lead Agency uses this data to calculate the percentage of economically disadvantaged children accessing early childhood programs, by comparing the estimated number of at-risk children at each age group to the number of children served in publicly-funded seats.**
 - iii. What is the plan to address the child care shortages using family child care homes **The Lead Agency aims to increase the number of Family Child Care sites (FCCs) in Louisiana participating in the child care assistance program, and particularly the**

number of FCCs participating in the Quality Rating System and the number of FCCs from rural, underserved communities. Multiple strategies are designed to spread awareness about the need for family child care and to incentivize participation as CCDF providers.

Early Childhood Community Networks and Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies assist the Lead Agency in communicating with local entities that may be interested in becoming Family Child Care sites registered with the Lead Agency. Community Networks and CCR&Rs share information about participating in the child care assistance program and the Quality Rating System at community events, network enrollment events, and through other information-sharing opportunities.

Additionally, the Lead Agency partners with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to communicate the opportunity to register with the Lead Agency and participate in the Quality Rating System through Academic Approval, such as the CACFP inviting the Lead Agency's Early Childhood Family Child Care manager to events where information about becoming a Family Child Care educator is shared.

Furthermore, to support FCCs participating in the Quality Rating System, the Lead Agency partners with the local Early Childhood Community Networks, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, and Mental Health Consultants to provide professional development and supports to these sites.

- iv. What is the plan to address the child care shortages using child care centers? **The local community networks work to recruit community providers to open additional classrooms or sites or to offer child care via diverse delivery, including in school-based sites. Local community networks also establish strategic funding plans, that identify potential community-level resources, and work to raise local funds that can be matched by the state's Early Childhood Education Fund (an incentive fund) and used to serve more children in centers.**
- b. In different regions of the State or Territory:
 - i. Data sources used to identify shortages: **The Lead Agency uses licensing and provider certification data to identify parishes or zip codes where no CCDF child care providers exist and shares that information with community networks on an annual basis.**
 - ii. Method of tracking progress: **The Lead Agency continually reviews family demand and unmet need for child care for infants through four year olds, as well as the number of child care providers. This occurs through information gathered twice per year when the Lead Agency conducts a statewide child count, in which community network lead agencies report all publicly-funded children enrolled on October 1 and February 1 across all program types (e.g, child care, schools, and Head Start/Early Head Start) and funding sources (e.g., Head Start, Title I, state PreK, local funding, CCAP, etc.). The Lead Agency uses this data to calculate the percentage of economically disadvantaged children accessing early childhood programs, by comparing the estimated amount of at-risk children at each age**

group to the number of children served in publicly-funded seats.

The Lead Agency annually reports publicly on the statewide percentage of economically disadvantaged children in each age group who are accessing high-quality early childhood programs using the same data sources listed above, as well as on the network performance profiles published on www.louisianaschools.com.

- iii. What is the plan to address the child care shortages using family child care homes? The Lead Agency aims to increase the number of Family Child Care sites (FCCs) in Louisiana participating in the child care assistance program, and particularly the number of FCCs participating in the Quality Rating System and the number of FCCs from rural, underserved communities. Multiple strategies are designed to spread awareness about the need for family child care and to incentivize participation as CCDF providers.

Early Childhood Community Networks and Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies assist the Lead Agency in communicating with local entities that may be interested in becoming Family Child Care sites registered with the Lead Agency. Community Networks and CCR&Rs share information about participating in the child care assistance program and the Quality Rating System at community events, network enrollment events, and through other information-sharing opportunities.

Additionally, the Lead Agency partners with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to communicate the opportunity to register with the Lead Agency and participate in the Quality Rating System through Academic Approval, such as the CACFP inviting the Lead Agency's Early Childhood Family Child Care manager to events where information about becoming a Family Child Care educator is shared.

Furthermore, to support FCCs participating in the Quality Rating System, the Lead Agency partners with the local Early Childhood Community Networks, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, and Mental Health Consultants to provide professional development and supports to these sites.

- iv. What is the plan to address the child care shortages using child care centers? The local community networks work to recruit community providers to open additional classrooms or sites or to offer child care via diverse delivery, including in school-based sites. Local community networks also establish strategic funding plans, that identify potential community-level resources, and work to raise local funds that can be matched by the state's Early Childhood Education Fund (an incentive fund) and used to serve more children in centers.

- c. In care for special populations:

- i. Data sources used to identify shortages: Children with disabilities are counted through their IEP or IFSP, and the Lead Agency analyzes service rates of children with disabilities at each age level birth through five, to compare to the service rates once children enter Kindergarten and first grades, to better understand identification and service gaps by community.

- ii. Method of tracking progress: **The Lead Agency uses a state data system, called eSER, to analyze data, compare service rates, and identify gaps that may exist in services. The Lead Agency tracks young children with disabilities to support a smooth and timely transition from early intervention services through an IFSP to school-based services through an IEP.**
- iii. What is the plan to address the child care shortages using family child care homes? **To support Family Child Care providers to meet the needs of all young children and families, including those of young children with disabilities, the Lead Agency partners with the local Early Childhood Community Networks, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, and Mental Health Consultants to provide professional development and supports to the FCC sites participating in the Quality Rating System.**
- iv. What is the plan to address the child care shortages using child care centers? **The Lead Agency addresses shortages in child care centers for young children with disabilities through training and professional development in developmental screening, through analysis of the ECE workforce, and through family engagement work. Through these workstreams the Lead Agency is able to assess the why behind the shortages, adequately train early child care providers who provide care for YCWD, and also ensure that families are an integral part of their child's care.**

4.5.4 Strategies to increase the supply of and improve quality of child care

Lead Agencies must develop and implement strategies to increase the supply of and improve the quality of child care services. These strategies must address child care in underserved geographic areas; infants and toddlers; children with disabilities, as defined by the Lead Agency; and children who receive care during non-traditional hours.

How does the Lead Agency identify any gaps in the supply and quality of child care services and what strategies are used to address those gaps for:

- a. Underserved geographic areas. Describe: **The Lead Agency partners with Ready Start Networks to improve the supply and quality of child care services in underserved geographic areas by providing support and technical assistance focused on identifying child care deserts (e.g., areas of each parish where child care is limited when compared with the population) and shortages in supply related to workforce. Support and technical assistance provided by the Lead Agency includes but is not limited to the Lead Agency encouraging networks to complete access landscape analyses or data evaluations based on annual Lead Agency-provided data kits, reviewing access data with the networks as part of efforts to identify access gaps and trends at the local level, and supporting network efforts to create community-level goals focused on access needs within the communities they serve.**

Additionally, the Lead Agency partners with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies to ensure that the quality of child care that already exists or is launched in underserved geographic areas receives quality supports. For example, many Family Child Care (FCC) sites provide care in areas where child care centers do not exist and do not have sufficient local demand currently to be sustainable business models. Therefore, CCR&R agencies work with FCC sites that are participating in state QRIS efforts and

provide them with professional learning (training and coaching) focused on quality improvement. Furthermore, if new child care sites are created in underserved areas, CCR&Rs are available to support the sites via professional learning focused on increasing the quality of care.

The Lead Agency will also continue to work to build supply in underserved geographic areas by dedicating contracted seats to those areas and by supporting networks in those underserved geographic areas to recruit and partner with potential or existing child care providers to expand quality access via those contracted seats.

- b. Infants and toddlers. Describe: The Lead Agency partners with Ready Start Networks to evaluate access for infants and toddlers in the communities they serve and to develop strategies focused on increasing the supply of infant and toddler care. This is primarily done via access analyses based on community-level landscape analysis work and/or evaluation of each network's data kit that provides an aggregated summary of community quality, access, and demographics. Data kits are provided to each early childhood community network annually by the Lead Agency.

Additionally, the Lead Agency partners with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions and overall classroom experiences for infants and toddlers. This is done via targeted on-site coaching and support focused on infant and toddler classrooms that have a Performance Profile score that falls below "Proficient" (a score of 4.49 and below), as based on the Infant or Toddler Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

The Lead Agency will also continue to work to build supply of infant and toddler care by dedicating contracted seats for those age groups and by supporting networks to recruit and partner with potential or existing child care providers to expand quality access for infants and toddlers via those contracted seats.

- c. Children with disabilities. Describe: The Lead Agency continues to expand the focus on ensuring that young children with disabilities (YCWD) have access to, and receive, the supports that facilitate development and learning within high-quality child care sites. To do this, the Lead Agency works with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies to analyze developmental screening processes in the communities they serve and develop strategic plans focused on ensuring that all young children, especially those with disabilities, have access to quality early childhood education at the local level.
- d. Children who receive care during non-traditional hours. Describe: At this time the Lead Agency is working to ensure that sites that provide care during non-traditional hours receive assessments that reflect the level of quality provided during those hours in alignment with the state's accountability system. To do this the Lead Agency is initiating meetings with early childhood community network leaders and the third-party contractor who conducts observations as part of the state's early childhood accountability system to begin developing guidance focused on conducting observations during non-traditional hours.

Because Family Child Care (FCC) sites are more likely than other site types to provide non-traditional hours care, the work will initially center around how to conduct effective and

accurate observations in FCC settings operating during non-traditional hours. Additionally, because some child care centers also provide non-traditional hours care, the Lead Agency plans to adjust the guidance created for FCC sites to ensure accurate assessments are also conducted in child care center sites that provide this type of care.

- e. Other. Specify what population is being focused on to increase supply or improve quality. Describe:

4.5.5 Prioritization of investments in areas of concentrated poverty and unemployment

Lead Agencies must prioritize investments for increasing access to high-quality child care and development services for children of families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and do not currently have sufficient numbers of such programs.

Describe how the Lead Agency prioritizes increasing access to high-quality child care and development services for children of families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and that do not have access to high-quality programs. **The Lead Agency will partner with Ready Start Networks to improve the supply and quality of child care services for children and families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and do not currently have a sufficient number of programs, by providing support and technical assistance. The support and technical assistance provided by the Lead Agency will include but not be limited to the Lead Agency encouraging networks to complete access landscape analyses or data evaluations based on annual Lead Agency-provided data kits, reviewing access data with the networks as part of efforts to identify access gaps and trends at the local level, including those related to areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment, and supporting network efforts to create community-level goals focused on those areas.**

The Lead Agency will also continue to work to increase access to high-quality care for children of families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and do not currently have sufficient numbers of such programs by dedicating contracted seats for those areas and by supporting networks to recruit and partner with potential or existing child care providers to expand quality access for those areas via those contracted seats. In addition, Louisiana has a matching incentive fund, called the Early Childhood Education Fund, that would allow the Lead Agency, if sufficient dollars are available in that fund after other qualifying project have been awarded, to provide remaining dollars to areas with high child poverty rates and high child care needs in terms of the economic development needs of the parish where the center is located.

5 Health and Safety of Child Care Settings

Child care health and safety standards and enforcement practices are essential to protect the health and safety of children while out of their parents' care. CCDF provides a minimum threshold for child care health and safety policies and practices but leaves authority to [Lead Agencies](#) to design standards that appropriately protect children's safety and promote nurturing environments that support their healthy growth and development. Lead Agencies should set standards for ratios, group size limits, and provider qualifications that help ensure that the child care environment is conducive to safety and learning and enable caregivers to promote all domains of children's development.

CCDF health and safety standards help set clear expectations for CCDF providers, form the foundation for health and safety training for child care workers, and establish the baseline for monitoring to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements. These health and safety requirements apply to all providers serving children receiving CCDF services – whether the providers are licensed or license-exempt, must be appropriate to the provider setting and age of the children served, must include specific topics and training on those topics, and are subject to monitoring and enforcement procedures by the [Lead Agency](#). CCDF-required annual monitoring and enforcement actions help ensure that CCDF providers are adopting and implementing health and safety requirements.

Through child care licensing, [Lead Agencies](#) set minimum requirements, including health and safety requirements, that child care providers must meet to legally operate in that State or Territory. In some cases, CCDF health and safety requirements may be integrated within the licensing system for licensed providers and may be separate for CCDF providers who are license-exempt.

This section addresses CCDF health and safety requirements, [Lead Agency](#) licensing requirements and exemptions, and comprehensive background checks.

When responding to questions in this section, OCC recognizes that each [Lead Agency](#) identifies and defines its own categories of care. OCC does not expect [Lead Agencies](#) to change their definitions to fit the CCDF-defined categories of care. For these questions, provide responses that best match the CCDF categories of care.

5.1 Licensing Requirements

Each Lead Agency must ensure it has in effect licensing requirements applicable to all child care services provided within the State/Territory (not restricted to providers receiving CCDF funds).

5.1.1 Providers subject to licensing

For each category of care listed below, identify the type of providers subject to licensing and describe the licensing requirements.

- a. Identify the center-based provider types subject to child care licensing: **Any place or center operated by any institution, political subdivision, society, agency, corporation, person or persons, or any other group for the purpose of providing care, supervision, and guidance of seven or more children, not including those related to the caregiver, unaccompanied by parent or legal custodian, on a regular basis for at least 12 1/2 hours in a continuous 7-day week**

Are there other categories of licensed, regulated, or registered center providers the Lead Agency does not categorize as license-exempt?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe:

☒ No.

- b. Identify the family child care providers subject to licensing: **Family Child Care providers are exempt from licensing.**

Are there other categories of regulated or registered family child care providers the Lead Agency does not categorize as license-exempt?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe:

☒ No.

- c. Identify the in-home providers subject to licensing: **In-home care is license-exempt.**

Are there other categories of regulated or registered in-home providers the Lead Agency does not categorize as license-exempt?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe:

☒ No.

5.1.2 CCDF-eligible providers exempt from licensing

Identify the categories of CCDF-eligible providers who are exempt from licensing requirements, the types of exemptions, and describe how these exemptions do not endanger the health, safety, and development of children. -Relative providers, as defined in CCDF, are addressed in subsection 5.8.

- a. License-exempt center-based child care. Describe by answering the questions below.

- i. Identify the categories of CCDF-eligible center-based child care providers who are exempt from licensing requirements. **CCDF-eligible Public School and BESE-Approved Nonpublic School Child Care Centers are exempt from licensing requirements. (BESE is the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.) A "School Child Care Center" is defined as any prekindergarten, or before and after school programs, or summer programs operated by a public school or a BESE-approved nonpublic school.**

- ii. Describe the exemptions based on length of day, threshold on the number of children in care, ages of children in care, or any other factors applicable to the exemption. **Sites that care for children who are age 3 or younger by September 30th of the current school year must be licensed.**

- iii. Describe how the exemptions for these CCDF-eligible providers do not endanger the health, safety, and development of children. **Child Care Assistance Program center-based child care providers exempt from licensing, such as schools, are subject to numerous health and safety regulations found in BESE Bulletin 119 - Louisiana School Transportation Specification and Procedures, BESE Bulletin 135 - Health and Safety, and BESE Bulletin 741 - Handbook for School Administrators. In addition, school facilities are inspected twice annually, and school kitchens are inspected four times annually by the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health. Schools are also inspected annually by the Office of State Fire Marshal.**

Additionally, BESE Bulletin 139 - Louisiana Child Care and Development Fund Program sets forth safety and health requirements for providers applying for registration and certification of eligibility for CCAP, including increased health and safety regulations passed by the Lead Agency's State Board (BESE). These providers also receive monitoring inspections twice per year by the Lead Agency's Licensing team.

- b. License-exempt family child care. Describe by answering the questions below.

- i. Identify the categories of CCDF-eligible family child care providers who are exempt from licensing requirements. **One or more individuals who provide child care services in a private residence other than the child's residence.**
 - ii. Describe the exemptions based on length of day, threshold on the number of children in care, ages of children in care, or any other factors applicable to the exemption. **Bulletin 139 Section 103 states, "One or more individuals who provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child up to age 13 or children with special needs who are under age 18 , unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent's work, for six or fewer children, in a private residence other than the child's residence."**
 - iii. Describe how the exemptions for these CCDF-eligible providers do not endanger the health, safety, and development of children. **Family child care providers are subject to the Louisiana "Family Child Care Provider and In Home Child Care Provider Registration Law," which requires all family child care and in-home child care providers that receive public funds to be registered (La. R.S. 17:407.63). Each family child care and in-home provider must be inspected and approved annually by the Office of State Fire Marshal (La. R.S.17:407.64). Additionally, BESE Bulletin 139 - Louisiana Child Care and Development Fund Program sets forth safety and health requirements for providers applying for registration and certification of eligibility for CCAP, including increased health and safety regulations passed by the Lead Agency's State Board (BESE). These providers also receive monitoring inspections twice per year by the Lead Agency's Licensing team.**
- c. In-home care (care in the child's own home by a non-relative). Describe by answering the questions below.
- i. Identify the categories of CCDF-eligible in-home care (care in the child's own home by a non- relative) providers who are exempt from licensing requirements. **Bulletin 139, Section 103 states, "an individual who provides child care services in the child or children's own home up to age 13 or children with special needs who are under age 18 is exempt from licensure."**
 - ii. Describe the exemptions based on length of day, threshold on the number of children in care, ages of children in care, or any other factors applicable to the exemption. **An in-home provider must be the sole caregiver for the children in the home during the hours for which the provider was certified to provide care. An in-home provider may not employ additional staff to care for the children.**
 - iii. Describe how the exemptions for these CCDF-eligible providers do not endanger the health, safety, and development of children. **Family child care and in-home providers are subject to the Louisiana "Family Child Care Provider and In Home Child Care Provider Registration Law," which requires all family child care and in-home child care providers that receive public funds to be registered (La. R.S. 17:407.63). Each family child care and in-home provider must be inspected and approved annually by the Office of State Fire Marshal (La. R.S.17:407.64). Additionally, BESE Bulletin 139 - Louisiana Child Care and Development Fund Program sets forth safety and health requirements for providers applying for registration and certification of eligibility for CCAP, including increased health and safety regulations passed by the Lead Agency's State Board (BESE).**

5.2 Ratios, Group Size, and Qualifications for CCDF Providers

Lead Agencies must have child care standards for providers receiving CCDF funds, appropriate to the type of child care setting involved, that address appropriate staff:child ratios, group size limits for specific age populations, and the required qualifications for providers. Lead Agencies should map their categories of care to the CCDF categories. Exemptions for relative providers will be addressed in subsection 5.8.

5.2.1 Age classifications

Describe how the **Lead Agency** defines the following age classifications (e.g., Infant: 0 – 18 months).

- a. Infant. Describe: **Under 1 year old**
- b. Toddler. Describe: **1-2 years old**
- c. Preschool. Describe: **3-4 years old**
- d. School-Age. Describe: **5 years old and above**

5.2.2 Ratio and group size limits

Provide the ratio and group size limits for settings and age groups below.

- a. Licensed CCDF center-based care:
 - i. Infant.
Ratio: **5:1**
Group size: **15**
 - ii. Toddler.
Ratio: **1 year olds = 7:1; 2 year olds = 10:1**

Group size: **1 year olds = 21; 2 year olds = 20**
 - iii. Preschool.
Ratio: **3 year olds = 13:1; 4 year olds = 15:1**
Group size: **3 year olds = 26; 4 year olds = 30**
 - iv. School-Age.
Ratio: **5 year olds = 19:1; 6 year olds and older = 23:1**
Group size: **5 year olds = 38; 6 year olds and older = 46**
 - v. Mixed-Age Groups (if applicable).

Ratio: **An average of the child to staff ratios may be applied to mixed age groups of children ages two, three, four, and five. When a mixed age group includes children younger than age two, the age of the youngest child determines the child-to-staff ratio for the group.**

Group size: **The age of the youngest child determines the group size when children in a group are of mixed ages.**

- b. If different, provide the ratios and group size requirements for the license-exempt center-based providers who receive CCDF funds under the following age groups:
- i. ☒ Not applicable. There are no differences in ratios and group size requirements.
 - ii. Infant:
 - iii. Toddler:
 - iv. Preschool:
 - v. School-Age:
 - vi. Mixed-Age Groups:
- c. Licensed CCDF family child care home providers:
- i. Infant (if applicable)
 - Ratio: **(not applicable)**
 - Group size: **(not applicable)**
 - ii. Toddler (if applicable)
 - Ratio: **(not applicable)**
 - Group size: **(not applicable)**
 - iii. Preschool (if applicable)
 - Ratio: **(not applicable)**
 - Group size: **(not applicable)**
 - iv. School-Age (if applicable)
 - Ratio: **(not applicable)**
 - Group size: **(not applicable)**
 - v. Mixed-Age Groups
 - Ratio: **(not applicable)**
 - Group size: **(not applicable)**
- d. Are any of the responses above different for license-exempt family child care homes?
- ☐ No.
- ☒ Yes. If yes, describe how the ratio and group size requirements for license-exempt providers vary by age of children served. **A family child care may care for a maximum of six children. The maximum child-to-staff ratio shall be 6:1.**
- ☐ Not applicable. The Lead Agency does not have license-exempt family child care homes.
- e. Licensed in-home care (care in the child's own home):
- i. Infant (if applicable)

- Ratio: **(not applicable)**
- Group size: **(not applicable)**
- ii. Toddler (if applicable)
- Ratio: **(not applicable)**
- Group size: **(not applicable)**
- iii. Preschool (if applicable)
- Ratio: **(not applicable)**
- Group size: **(not applicable)**
- iv. School-Age (if applicable)
- Ratio: **(not applicable)**
- Group size: **(not applicable)**
- v. Mixed-Age Groups (if applicable)
- Ratio: **(not applicable)**
- Group size: **(not applicable)**
- f. Are any of the responses above different for license-exempt in-home care?
- ☐ No.
- ☒ Yes. If yes, describe how the ratio and group size requirements for license-exempt in-home care vary by age of children served. **A license-exempt in-home provider may care for a maximum of 6 children. The maximum child-to-staff ratio for a license-exempt in-home provider is 6:1.**

5.2.3 Teacher/caregiver qualifications for licensed, regulated, or registered care

Provide the teacher/caregiver qualifications for each category of care.

- a. Licensed center-based care
- i. Describe the teacher qualifications for licensed CCDF center-based care (e.g., degrees, credentials, etc.), including any variations based on the ages of children in care: **Staff age 18 or older may be included in the child-to-staff ratio and may work without the direct supervision of another adult staff member. Staff age 16 and 17 may be included in the child-to-staff ratio if the person works under the direct supervision of an adult staff member.**
- ii. Describe the director qualification for licensed CCDF center-based care, including any variations based on the ages of children in care or the number of staff employed: **The director/director designee shall be at least 21 years of age. The director/director designee shall have documentation of at least one of the following upon date of hire as director or director designee: 1) an early childhood ancillary certificate and one year of experience in teaching or care in a licensed early learning center or comparable setting, subject to approval by the department; 2) a national administrator credential and one year experience in teaching or care in a licensed early learning center, or comparable setting, plus 6**

credit hours or 90 clock hours of training in child care, child development, early childhood, or management/administration, subject to approval by the department; 3) or three years of experience as a director or staff in a licensed early learning center, or comparable setting, subject to approval by the department plus 6 credit hours or 90 clock hours of training in child care, child development, early childhood, or management/administration approved by the department. A director who was qualified on the director's date of hire remains qualified as long as the director remains continuously employed at the licensed center or at another licensed center without a break in service of more than 90 days.

b. Licensed family child care

Describe the provider qualifications for licensed family child care homes, including any variations based on the ages of children in care: **(not applicable)**

c. Licensed, regulated, or registered in-home care (care in the child's own home by a non-relative)

Describe the provider qualifications for licensed, regulated, or registered in-home care providers (care in the child's own home) including any variations based on the ages of children in care: **Per Bulletin 139, Section 309, the provider must be at least 18 years old; complete a 4-hour pre-service orientation training; have an eligible CCCBC; and complete adult and child CPR, Pediatric First Aid and Medication Administration training, mandated reporter training, and Lead Agency Key Orientation Training Modules.**

5.2.4 Teacher/caregiver qualifications for license-exempt providers

Provide the teacher/provider qualification requirements (for instance, age, high school diploma, specific training, etc.) for the license-exempt providers under the following categories of care:

- a. License-exempt center-based child care. **Per Bulletin 139 Section 313, the provider must complete a 4-hour pre-service orientation training; have an eligible CCCBC; and complete adult and child CPR, Pediatric First Aid and Medication Administration training, mandated reporter training, and Lead Agency Key Orientation Training Modules.**
- b. License-exempt home-based child care. **Per Bulletin 139 Section 311, the provider must be at least 18 years old; complete a 4-hour pre-service orientation training; have an eligible CCCBC; and complete adult and child CPR, Pediatric First Aid and Medication Administration training, mandated reporter training, and Lead Agency Key Orientation Training Modules.**
- c. License-exempt in-home care (care in the child's own home). **Per Bulletin 139, Section 309, the provider must be at least 18 years old; complete a 4-hour pre-service orientation training; have an eligible CCCBC; and complete adult and child CPR, Pediatric First Aid and Medication Administration training, mandated reporter training, and Lead Agency Key Orientation Training Modules.**

5.3 Health and Safety Standards for CCDF Providers

Lead Agencies must have health and safety standards for providers serving children receiving CCDF assistance relating to the required health and safety topics as appropriate to the provider setting and age of the children served. This requirement is applicable to all child care programs receiving CCDF funds regardless of licensing status (i.e., licensed or license-exempt). The only exception to this requirement is for relative providers, as defined by CCDF. Lead Agencies have the option of exempting certain relatives from any or all CCDF health and safety requirements.

Exemptions for relative providers' standards requirements will be addressed in question 5.8.1.

Describe the following health and safety standards for programs serving children receiving CCDF assistance on the following topics (note that monitoring and enforcement will be addressed in subsection 5.5):

5.3.1 Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations) health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the prevention and control of infectious diseases for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF licensed center care providers are required to make immediate notification to the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) for reportable infectious diseases listed in LAC 51.II.105. Providers are required to complete annual training in this topic in addition to their 12 clock hours.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **CCDF license-exempt center care providers are required to make immediate notification to the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) for reportable infectious diseases listed in LAC 51.II.105. Providers are required to complete annual training in this topic.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **CCDF license-exempt family child care home providers are required to make immediate notification to the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) for reportable infectious diseases listed in LAC 51.II.105. Providers are required to complete annual training in this topic.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **CCDF license-exempt in-home care providers are required to make immediate notification to the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) for reportable infectious diseases listed in LAC 51.II.105. Providers are required to complete annual training in this topic.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address that children attending child care programs under CCDF are age-appropriately

immunized, according to the latest recommendation for childhood immunizations of the respective State public health agency, for the following CCDF-eligible providers:

- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All children receiving services under CCDF are age-appropriately immunized or provide verification that such immunizations are in progress, unless the parent or guardian submits a written statement from the physician or a written dissent for religious or personal reasons.**
- ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
- iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **All children receiving services under CCDF license-exempt center care are age-appropriately immunized or provide verification that such immunizations are in progress, unless the parent or guardian submits a written statement from the physician or a written dissent for religious or personal reasons.**
- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **All children receiving services under CCDF license-exempt family child care are age-appropriately immunized or provide verification that such immunizations are in progress, unless the parent or guardian submits a written statement from the physician or a written dissent for religious or personal reasons.**
- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **All children receiving services under CCDF license-exempt in-home care are age-appropriately immunized or provide verification that such immunizations are in progress, unless the parent or guardian submits a written statement from the physician or a written dissent for religious or personal reasons.**
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.2 Prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and the use of safe-sleep practices health and safety standard

Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices for the following CCDF-eligible providers:

- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF center-based providers are required to ensure staff receive orientation on prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and the use of safe sleep practices within 7 calendar days of the first day of becoming present at the center and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children. All CCDF and non-CCDF providers are required to ensure the following: only one infant shall be placed in a crib and infants shall be placed on their backs for sleeping; written authorization from a physician is required for any other sleeping position, and written notice of the specifically authorized sleeping position shall be posted on or near the crib; infants shall not**

be placed in positioning devices, unless the center has written authorization from a physician to use a positioning device; written authorization from a physician is required for a child to sleep in a car seat or other similar device and shall include the amount of time that the child is allowed to remain in said device; "Back To Sleep" signs shall be posted in the room where infants sleep; infants who use pacifiers shall be offered their pacifier when they are placed to sleep, but it shall not be placed back in the mouth once the child is asleep; bibs shall not be worn by any child while asleep; nothing shall be placed over the head or face of an infant; a safety-approved crib shall be available for each infant.

- ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
☒ Not applicable.
- iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care providers are required to ensure completion of orientation on prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and the use of safe-sleep practices.**
- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care home providers are required to ensure staff receive orientation on prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and the use of safe sleep practices. All CCDF providers are required to ensure the following: only one infant shall be placed in a crib, and infants shall be placed on their backs for sleeping; written authorization from a physician is required for any other sleeping position, and written notice of the specifically authorized sleeping position shall be posted on or near the crib; infants shall not be placed in positioning devices, unless there is written authorization from a physician to use a positioning device; written authorization from a physician is required for a child to sleep in a car seat or other similar device and shall include the amount of time that the child is allowed to remain in said device; "Back To Sleep" signs shall be posted in the room where infants sleep; infants who use pacifiers shall be offered their pacifier when they are placed to sleep, but it shall not be placed back in the mouth once the child is asleep; bibs shall not be worn by any child while asleep; nothing shall be placed over the head or face of an infant; a safety-approved crib shall be available for each infant.**
- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care providers are required to ensure completion of orientation on prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and the use of safe-sleep practices. All CCDF providers are required to ensure the following: only one infant shall be placed in a crib, and infants shall be placed on their backs for sleeping; written authorization from a physician is required for any other sleeping position, and written notice of the specifically authorized sleeping position shall be posted on or near the crib; infants shall not be placed in positioning devices, unless there is written authorization from a physician to use a positioning device; written authorization from a physician is required for a child to sleep in a car seat or other similar device and shall include**

the amount of time that the child is allowed to remain in said device; ☒ Back To Sleep signs shall be posted in the room where infants sleep; infants who use pacifiers shall be offered their pacifier when they are placed to sleep, but it shall not be placed back in the mouth once the child is asleep; bibs shall not be worn by any child while asleep; nothing shall be placed over the head or face of an infant; a safety-approved crib shall be available for each infant.

- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.3 Administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the administration of medication for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All licensed CCDF providers who have staff members administering medication are required to have medication administration training that includes information about the use of auto-injectable epinephrine. Whether administering medication or not, at least two staff members in child care centers are required to have training in medication administration. This training must be completed every two years via Lead Agency-approved training. No medication or special medical procedure can be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent, and that authorization should include name of child; drug name and strength; date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including the route (e.g., oral, topical), dosage, frequency, time and schedule, and special instructions, if any; and signature of parent and date of signature. It is not acceptable to note "as indicated on the bottle." All medication shall be sent to the site, must be in its original container, shall not have an expired date, and must be clearly labeled with the name of the child. For prescription medication to be administered at the site, the site shall maintain the original pharmacy container with the complete pharmacy label. For non-prescription medication to be administered, the site shall maintain the original bottle packing for the medicine or a printed document from the manufacturer's website, which shall include the drug name and strength and clear directions for use.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:

☒ Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care providers must provide documentation of current medication administration training approved by the Department. Providers must ensure no medication or special medical procedure shall be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent. Such authorization shall include the name of the child; drug name and strength; date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including route, dosage, frequency, time,**

and special instructions if applicable; and signature of parent and date of signature.

- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care home providers must provide documentation of current medication administration training approved by the Department. The provider must ensure that no medication or special medical procedure shall be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent. Such authorization shall include the name of the child; drug name and strength, date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including route, dosage, frequency, time, and special instructions if applicable; and signature of parent and date of signature.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care providers must provide documentation of current medication administration training approved by the Department. Providers must ensure no medication or special medical procedure shall be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent. Such authorization shall include the name of the child; drug name and strength; date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including route, dosage, frequency, time, and special instructions if applicable; and signature of parent and date of signature.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address obtaining permission from parents to administer medications to children for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **No medication can be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent, and that authorization should include name of child; drug name and strength; date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including the route (e.g., oral, topical), dosage, frequency, time and schedule, and special instructions, if any; and signature of parent and date of signature.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x]Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt center care providers are required to provide documentation of current medication administration training and ensure no medication or special medical procedure shall be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent. Such authorization shall include the name of the child; drug name and strength; date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including route, dosage, frequency, time and special instructions if applicable; and signature of parent and date of signature.**

- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt family child care home providers are required to provide documentation of current medication administration training and ensure no medication or special medical procedure shall be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent. Such authorization shall include the name of the child; drug name and strength; date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including route, dosage, frequency, time and special instructions if applicable; and signature of parent and date of signature.**
- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt in-home care providers are required to provide documentation of current medication administration training and ensure no medication or special medical procedure shall be administered to a child unless authorized in writing by the parent. Such authorization shall include the name of the child; drug name and strength; date(s) to be administered; directions for use, including route, dosage, frequency, time and special instructions if applicable; and signature of parent and date of signature.**
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.4 Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the *prevention* of emergencies due to food and allergic reactions for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All licensed CCDF providers are required to ensure staff receive center-specific orientation on prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions within 7 calendar days of the first day being present at the center and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children. Information regarding food allergies and special diets of children shall be posted in the food preparation area with special care taken to ensure that individual names of children are not in public view. If a parent chooses to allow the center to post the child's name and allergy information in public view, the center shall obtain a signed and dated authorization from the parent. Children with allergies or special diets shall not be served foods identified as restricted by the parent.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:

[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt center care providers must complete pre-service orientation regarding prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions. Information regarding food allergies and special diets of children shall be posted in the food preparation area with special care taken to**

ensure that individual names of children are not in public view. If a parent chooses to allow the provider to post the child's name and allergy information in public view, a signed and dated authorization from the parent shall be obtained.

- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt family child care home providers must complete pre-service orientation regarding prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions. Information regarding food allergies and special diets of children shall be posted in the food preparation area with special care taken to ensure that individual names of children are not in public view. If a parent chooses to allow the provider to post the child's name and allergy information in public view, a signed and dated authorization from the parent shall be obtained.**
- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt in-home care providers must complete pre-service orientation regarding prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions. Information regarding food allergies and special diets of children shall be posted in the food preparation area with special care taken to ensure that individual names of children are not in public view. If a parent chooses to allow the provider to post the child's name and allergy information in public view, a signed and dated authorization from the parent shall be obtained.**
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the *response* to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All licensed CCDF providers are required to ensure staff receive center-specific orientation on prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions within 7 calendar days of the first day being present at the center and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children. All licensed CCDF providers are required to make immediate notification, of any emergencies due to food or allergic reactions, to the parent and within 24 hours to the Lead Agency and to Child Welfare.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard::

[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt center care providers must complete pre-service orientation regarding prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt family child care home providers must**

complete pre-service orientation regarding prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions.

- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt in-home care providers must complete pre-service orientation regarding prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions.**
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.5 Building and physical premises safety, including the identification of and protection from hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the identification of and protection from building and physical premises hazards for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF providers are required to ensure all equipment used by children shall be maintained in a clean and safe condition and in good repair. Indoor and outdoor space shall be used exclusively by children in care and center staff during hours of operation. Indoor and outdoor areas shall be free of hazards. Items that can be harmful to children, such as medications, poisons, cleaning supplies and chemicals, and equipment, tools, knives and other potentially dangerous utensils, shall be kept in a locked cabinet or other secure place that ensures they are inaccessible to children. Outdoor play space shall be enclosed with a permanent fence or other permanent barrier in a manner that protects children from traffic hazards, prevents children from leaving the premises without proper supervision, and prevents contact with animals or unauthorized persons.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must receive orientation in building and physical premises safety.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must receive orientation in building and physical premises safety.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must receive orientation in building and physical premises safety.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that

address the identification of and protection from bodies of water for the following CCDF-eligible providers:

- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF providers must ensure within 7 calendar days of the first day present at the center and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children orientation is completed in protection from bodies of water. Swimming, wading, and boating is prohibited in lakes, ponds, and other similar bodies of water.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must receive orientation in identification of and protection from bodies of water.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must receive orientation in identification of and protection from bodies of water.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must receive orientation in identification of and protection from bodies of water.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- c. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the identification of and protection from vehicular traffic hazards for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF providers must have an outdoor play space enclosed with a permanent fence or other permanent barrier in a manner that protects children from traffic hazards. Within 7 calendar days of the first day present at a licensed center, and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children, each staff member shall complete orientation training that addresses the identification of and protection from vehicular traffic hazards.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must receive orientation in identification of and protection from vehicular traffic hazards.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must**

receive orientation in identification of and protection from vehicular traffic hazards.

- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must receive orientation in identification of and protection from vehicular traffic hazards.**
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.6 Prevention of shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma, and maltreatment health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma and indicate the age of children it applies to for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF providers caring for infants are required to ensure staff receive orientation on prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma within 7 calendar days of being present at the center and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt center care providers must maintain policy and procedures to identify, prevent, and respond to shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt family child care home providers caring for infants must maintain policy and procedures to identify, prevent, and respond to shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt in-home care providers caring for infants must maintain policy and procedures to identify, prevent, and respond to shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the prevention of child maltreatment and indicate the age of children it applies to for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF providers caring for a child of any age are required to ensure staff receive orientation on prevention of child maltreatment within 7 calendar days of being present at the**

center and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children.

- ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
- iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt center care providers caring for a child of any age must maintain policy and procedures to identify, prevent, and respond to child maltreatment.**
- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt family child care home providers caring for a child of any age must maintain policy and procedures to identify, prevent, and respond to child maltreatment.**
- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, license-exempt in-home care providers caring for a child of any age must maintain policy and procedures to identify, prevent, and respond to child maltreatment.**
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.7 Emergency preparedness and response planning standard

Identify by checking below that the emergency preparedness and response planning due to natural disasters and human-caused events standard includes procedures in the following areas:

- i. **[x]** Evacuation
- ii. **[x]** Relocation
- iii. **[x]** Shelter-in-place
- iv. **[x]** Lock down
- v. Staff emergency preparedness
 - [x]** Training
 - [x]** Practice drills
- vi. Volunteer emergency preparedness
 - [x]** Training
 - [x]** Practice drills
- vii. **[x]** Communication with families
- viii. **[x]** Reunification with families
- ix. **[x]** Continuity of operations
- x. Accommodation of

- ☒ Infants
- ☒ Toddlers
- ☒ Children with disabilities
- ☒ Children with chronic medical conditions

xi. If any of the above are not checked, describe:

5.3.8 Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of biocontaminants health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the handling and storage of hazardous materials for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF providers must ensure items that can be harmful to children, such as medications, poisons, cleaning supplies and chemicals, and equipment, tools, knives and other potentially dangerous utensils, shall be kept in a locked cabinet or other secure place that ensures they are inaccessible to children.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
 - ☒ Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must ensure items such as medications, poisons, cleaning supplies and chemicals, equipment, tools, knives and other potentially dangerous utensils that can be harmful to children shall be kept in a locked cabinet or other secure place that ensures items are inaccessible to children.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must ensure items such as medications, poisons, cleaning supplies and chemicals, equipment, tools, knives and other potentially dangerous utensils that can be harmful to children shall be kept in a locked cabinet or other secure place that ensures items are inaccessible to children.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must ensure items such as medications, poisons, cleaning supplies and chemicals, equipment, tools, knives and other potentially dangerous utensils that can be harmful to children shall be kept in a locked cabinet or other secure place that ensures items are inaccessible to children.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that

address the disposal of bio contaminants for the following CCDF-eligible providers:

- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF providers must ensure staff shall properly dispose of all bio contaminants to safeguard against the spread of infectious disease by taking the following steps: 1. Discard disposable rubber gloves that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use; 2. Discard tissues, paper towels, disposable wipes, and similar products that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use; 3. Place soiled disposable diapers in a closed container that is lined with a leak-proof or impervious lining, remove the soiled disposable diapers from the facility, and place them in a closed garbage receptacle outside the building on a daily basis; 4. Place soiled non-disposable diapers in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name and return the diapers to the child's parent at the end of the day; 5. Place soiled clothes in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name and return the clothes to the child's parent at the end of each day or launder the clothes at the facility.**
- ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:

[x] Not applicable.
- iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must ensure proper disposal of all bio contaminants to safeguard against the spread of infectious disease. This includes the following steps: a. Discard disposable rubber gloves that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use. b. Discard tissues, paper towels, disposable wipes, and similar products that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use. c. Place soiled disposable diapers in a closed container that is lined with a leak-proof or impervious lining, remove the soiled disposable diapers from the facility, and place them in a closed garbage receptacle outside the building on a daily basis. d. Place soiled non-disposable diapers in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name and return the diapers to the child's parent at the end of the day. e. Place soiled clothes in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name and return the clothes to the child's parent at the end of the day or launder the clothes at the facility. f. Sheets and coverings shall be changed immediately when soiled or wet.**
- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care providers must ensure proper disposal of all bio contaminants to safeguard against the spread of infectious disease. This includes the following steps: a. Discard disposable rubber gloves that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use. b. Discard tissues, paper towels, disposable wipes, and similar products that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use. c. Place soiled disposable diapers in a closed container that is lined with a leak-proof or impervious lining, remove the soiled disposable diapers from the facility, and place them in a closed garbage receptacle outside the building on a daily basis. d. Place soiled non-disposable diapers in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name**

and return the diapers to the child's parent at the end of the day. e. Place soiled clothes in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name and return the clothes to the child's parent at the end of the day or launder the clothes at the facility. f. Sheets and coverings shall be changed immediately when soiled or wet.

- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must ensure proper disposal of all bio contaminants to safeguard against the spread of infectious disease. This includes the following steps:** a. Discard disposable rubber gloves that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use. b. Discard tissues, paper towels, disposable wipes, and similar products that come into contact with a bio contaminant after each use. c. Place soiled disposable diapers in a closed container that is lined with a leak-proof or impervious lining, remove the soiled disposable diapers from the facility, and place them in a closed garbage receptacle outside the building on a daily basis. d. Place soiled non-disposable diapers in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name and return the diapers to the child's parent at the end of the day. e. Place soiled clothes in a sealed plastic container that has been labeled with the child's name and return the clothes to the child's parent at the end of the day or launder the clothes at the facility. f. Sheets and coverings shall be changed immediately when soiled or wet.
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.9 Precautions in transporting children health and safety standard

Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address precautions in transporting children for the following CCDF-eligible providers:

- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **All CCDF provider must ensure staff members responsible for transporting children shall receive additional orientation training in the following areas prior to assuming their transportation duties: transportation regulations, including the modeling of how to properly conduct a vehicle passenger check and demonstration by staff to director on how to conduct a vehicle passenger check; proper use of child safety restraints required by state law; proper loading, unloading, and tracking of children as required by state law; and location of first aid supplies and emergency procedures for the vehicle, including actions to be taken in the event of accidents or breakdowns.**
- ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:

[x] Not applicable.
- iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers transporting children must ensure use of child safety restraints, such as car seat belts, child restraint seats, infant carrier seats, etc., as required by law in the transportation of children; b.**

take precautions necessary to ensure the safety of children being transported; c. develop written emergency procedures and actions to be taken in the event of an accident or breakdown; d. maintain a current driver's license and current automobile insurance as required by law; e. obtain written permission from a parent to transport the child; and f. maintain a transportation log for each trip to be used to track children during transportation, which shall include the child's name; the date, time, and place of pick up and drop off; and the name of the person to whom a child is released.

- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers transporting children must ensure use of child safety restraints, such as car seat belts, child restraint seats, infant carrier seats, etc., as required by law in the transportation of children; b. take precautions necessary to ensure the safety of children being transported; c. develop written emergency procedures and actions to be taken in the event of an accident or breakdown; d. maintain a current driver's license and current automobile insurance as required by law; e. obtain written permission from a parent to transport the child; and f. maintain a transportation log for each trip to be used to track children during transportation, which shall include the child's name; the date, time, and place of pick up and drop off; and the name of the person to whom a child is released.
- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers transporting children must ensure use of child safety restraints, such as car seat belts, child restraint seats, infant carrier seats, etc., as required by law in the transportation of children; b. take precautions necessary to ensure the safety of children being transported; c. develop written emergency procedures and actions to be taken in the event of an accident or breakdown; d. maintain a current driver's license and current automobile insurance as required by law; e. obtain written permission from a parent to transport the child; and f. maintain a transportation log for each trip to be used to track children during transportation, which shall include the child's name; the date, time, and place of pick up and drop off; and the name of the person to whom a child is released.
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.10 Pediatric first aid and pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address pediatric first aid for all staff for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **Within 90 calendar days from the date of hire and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children, all licensed CCDF providers must ensure each staff member has current certification in pediatric first aid. Prior to receiving certification, caregivers and teachers who provide direct care for children must be supervised until training is completed.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not**

applicable

- iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
- iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must have documentation of current pediatric first aid.**
- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must have documentation of current pediatric first aid.**
- vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must have documentation of current pediatric first aid.**
- vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation for all staff for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
 - i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **Within 90 calendar days from the date of hire and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children, all licensed CCDF providers must ensure each staff member has current certification in pediatric CPR. Prior to certification, caregivers and teachers who provide direct care for children must be supervised until training is completed.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must have documentation of current pediatric CPR.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must have documentation of current pediatric CPR.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must have documentation of current pediatric CPR.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**

5.3.11 Identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect health and safety standard

- a. Provide the standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the identification of child abuse and neglect for the following CCDF-eligible

providers:

- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **Within seven calendar days of date of hire and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children, all licensed CCDF providers must ensure each staff member shall receive orientation regarding child abuse identification and reporting. Licensed centers shall establish in writing and implement a child abuse and neglect policy.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must have orientation in recognition of child abuse and neglect.**
 - v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must have orientation in recognition of child abuse and neglect.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must have orientation in recognition of child abuse and neglect.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- b. Provide your standards, appropriate to the provider setting and age of children, that address the reporting of child abuse and neglect for the following CCDF-eligible providers:
- i. All CCDF-eligible licensed center care. Provide the standard: **Within seven calendar days of date of hire and prior to assuming sole responsibility for any children, all licensed CCDF providers must ensure each staff member shall receive orientation regarding child abuse identification and reporting. Licensed centers shall establish in writing and implement a child abuse and neglect policy. All staff and owners shall report any allegation or suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Louisiana Child Protection Statewide Hotline at (855) 4LA-KIDS [(855) 452-5437]. There shall not be a delay in the reporting of suspected abuse or neglect to the Child Protection Statewide Hotline in order to conduct an internal investigation to verify the abuse or neglect allegations, and staff shall not be required to report suspected abuse or neglect to the center or management prior to reporting it to the Child Protection Statewide Hotline.**
 - ii. All CCDF-eligible licensed family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
 - iii. All CCDF-eligible licensed in-home care. Provide the standard:
[x] Not applicable.
 - iv. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt center care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt center care providers must have orientation in**

reporting of child abuse and neglect.

- v. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt family child care homes. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt family child care home providers must have orientation in reporting of child abuse and neglect.**
 - vi. All CCDF-eligible license-exempt in-home care. Provide the standard: **Prior to certification, all license-exempt in-home care providers must have orientation in reporting of child abuse and neglect.**
 - vii. All CCDF-eligible out-of-school programs (afterschool programs, summer camps, day camps, etc.). Provide the standard: **Not applicable**
- c. Confirm if child care providers must comply with the [Lead Agency's](#) procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect as required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)(2)(B)(i):

☒ Yes, confirmed.

☐ No. If no, describe:

5.3.12 Additional optional standards

In addition to the required health and safety standards, does the Lead Agency require providers to comply with the following optional standards?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, skip to Section 5.4

If yes, describe the standard(s).

- i. Nutrition. Describe: **All meals and snacks provided by licensed centers, and their preparation, service, and storage, shall meet the requirements for meals of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), 7 CFR 226.20, and LAC 51:XXIII. A minimum of breakfast or a morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack shall be served to children, and meals and snacks shall be served not more than three hours apart. Centers that do not serve breakfast shall have nutritious food available for children who arrive in the morning without having eaten breakfast. Children under age four shall not have foods that are implicated in choking incidents. Examples of these foods include, but are not limited to, whole hot dogs, hot dogs sliced in rounds, raw carrot rounds, whole grapes, hard candy, nuts, seeds, raw peas, hard pretzels, hard chips with the exception of puffs, peanuts, popcorn, whole marshmallows other than when melted in other foods or found in boxed cereals, spoons of peanut butter, and chunks of meat larger than what can be swallowed whole.**

- ii. Access to physical activity. Describe: **An early learning center shall establish in writing and implement procedures for physical activity: children under age two shall be provided time and space for age-appropriate physical activity, both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting, for a minimum of 60 minutes per day; children age two and older shall be provided physical activity that includes a combination of both teacher-led and free play, both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting, for a minimum of 60 minutes per day.**
- iii. Caring for children with special needs. Describe: **When the nature of a child with special health care needs or the number of children with special health care needs warrants added care, the center shall add sufficient staff as necessary.**
- iv. Any other areas determined necessary to promote child development or to protect children’s health and safety. Describe: **Within 30 calendar days of hire, each staff member shall receive orientation to the additional policies and practices of the center that at a minimum shall include child development, child guidance, and learning activities.**

5.4 Pre-Service or Orientation Training on Health and Safety Standards

Lead Agencies must have requirements for all caregivers, teachers, and directors at CCDF providers to complete pre-service or orientation training (within 3 months of starting) on all CCDF health and safety standards and child development. The training must be appropriate to the setting and the age of children served. This training must address the required health and safety standards and the content area of child development. Lead Agencies have flexibility in determining the minimum number of training hours to require, and are encouraged to consult with Caring for our Children Basics for best practices.

Exemptions for relative providers’ training requirements are addressed in question 5.8.1.

5.4.1 Health and safety pre-service/orientation training requirements

Lead Agencies must certify staff have pre-service or orientation training on each standard that is appropriate to different settings and age groups. Lead Agencies may require pre-service or orientation to be completed before staff can care for children unsupervised. In the table below, check the boxes for which you have training requirements.

	Is this standard addressed in the pre-service or orientation training?	Is the pre-service or orientation training on this standard appropriate to different settings and age groups?	Does the Lead Agency require staff to complete the training before caring for children unsupervised?
a. Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations)	[x]	[x]	[x]
b. SIDS prevention and use of safe sleep practices	[x]	[x]	[x]
c. Administration of medication	[x]	[x]	[x]
d. Prevention and response to food and allergic reactions	[x]	[x]	[x]
e. Building and physical premises safety, including identification of and protection from hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic	[x]	[x]	[x]
f. Prevention of shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma and child maltreatment	[x]	[x]	[x]
g. Emergency preparedness and response planning and procedures	[x]	[x]	[x]
h. Handling and storage of hazardous materials and disposal of biocontaminants	[x]	[x]	[x]
i. Appropriate Precautions in transporting children, if applicable	[x]	[x]	[x]
j. Pediatric first aid and pediatric CPR (age-	[x]	[x]	[x]

appropriate)			
k. Child abuse and neglect recognition and reporting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
l. Child development including major domains of cognitive, social, emotional, physical development and approaches to learning.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

m. If the Lead Agency does not certify implementation of all the health and safety pre-service/orientation training requirements for staff in programs serving children receiving CCDF assistance, please describe: **Not applicable**

n. Are there any provider categories to whom the above pre-service or orientation training requirements do not apply?

☒ No

☐ Yes. If yes, describe:

5.5 Monitoring and Enforcement of Licensing and Health and Safety Requirements

5.5.1 Inspections for licensed CCDF providers

Licensing inspectors must perform at least one annual, unannounced inspection of each licensed CCDF provider for compliance with all child care licensing standards, including an inspection for compliance with health and safety and fire standards. Lead Agencies must conduct at least one pre-licensure inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards of each child care provider and facility in the State/Territory.

a. Licensed CCDF center-based providers

i. Does your pre-licensure inspection for licensed center-based providers assess compliance with health standards, safety standards, and fire standards?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

ii. Identify the frequency of annual unannounced inspections for licensed center-based providers addressing compliance with health, safety, and fire standards:

☐ Annually.

☒ More than once a year. If more than once a year, describe: **Once a center is licensed, all inspections thereafter are unannounced. A licensed center will receive at least one unannounced additional compliance inspection each year. A licensed center may have additional unannounced inspections due to the frequency of complaints and critical incident reports received.**

☐ Other. If other, describe:

- iii. Does the Lead Agency implement a differential monitoring approach when monitoring licensed center-based providers?
☐ Yes. If yes, describe how the differential monitoring approach is representative of the full complement of health and safety requirements.
☒ No. If no, describe: **All licensed center-based providers receive a compliance monitoring inspection in the following areas: Supervision, Child/Staff Ratio, CPR/PFA, Hazards, Safety Requirements, Playground Observation, Nutrition, Discipline, Child Care Criminal Background Checks, and Attendance.**
 - iv. Identify which department or agency is responsible for completing the inspections for licensed center-based providers. **The Lead Agency's Division of Licensing in the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education.**
 - b. Licensed CCDF family child care providers
 - i. Does your pre-licensure inspection for licensed family child care homes assess compliance with health standards, safety standards, and fire standards?
☐ Yes.
☒ No. If no, describe: **Not applicable. Louisiana does not license family child care providers.**
 - ii. Identify the frequency of annual unannounced inspections for licensed family child care homes addressing compliance with health, safety, and fire standards:
☐ Annually.
☐ More than once a year. If more than once a year, describe:
☒ Other. If other, describe: **Not applicable**
 - iii. Does the Lead Agency implement a differential monitoring approach when monitoring licensed family child care providers?
☐ Yes. If yes, describe how the differential monitoring approach is representative of the full complement of health and safety requirements.
☒ No. If no, describe: **Not applicable**
 - iv. Identify which department or agency is responsible for completing the inspections for licensed family child care providers. **Not applicable**
 - c. Licensed in-home CCDF child care providers
 - i. Does your Lead Agency license CCDF in-home child care (care in the child's own home) providers?
☒ No.
☐ Yes. If yes, does your pre-licensure inspection for licensed in-home providers assess compliance with health, safety, and fire standards?
☐ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
 - ii. Identify the frequency of annual unannounced inspections for licensed in-home

child care providers for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards completed:

☐ Annually.

☐ More than once a year. If more than once a year, describe:

☒ Other. If other, describe: **Not applicable**

- iii. Does the Lead Agency implement a differential monitoring approach when monitoring licensed in-home child care providers?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe how the differential monitoring approach is representative of the full complement of health and safety requirements.

☒ No.

- iv. Identify which department or agency is responsible for completing the inspections for licensed in-home providers. **Not applicable**

5.5.2 Inspections for license-exempt providers

Licensing inspectors must perform at least one annual monitoring visit of each license-exempt CCDF provider for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards. Inspections for relative providers will be addressed in subsection 5.8.

Describe the policies and practices for the annual monitoring of:

- a. License-exempt CCDF center-based child care providers

- i. Identify the frequency of inspections for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards for license-exempt center-based providers:

☐ Annually.

☒ More than once a year. If more than once a year, describe: **License-exempt CCDF center-based providers receive two inspections each year after certification, one announced and one unannounced inspection.**

☐ Other. If other, describe:

- ii. Does the Lead Agency implement a differential monitoring approach when monitoring license-exempt center-based providers?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe how the differential monitoring approach is representative of the full complement of health and safety requirements.

☒ No.

- iii. Identify which department or agency is responsible for completing the inspections for license-exempt center-based CCDF providers. **The Lead Agency's Division of Licensing in the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education**

- b. License-exempt CCDF family child care providers

- i. Identify the frequency of the inspections of license-exempt family child care providers to determine compliance with health, safety, and fire standards:

☐ Annually.

☒ More than once a year. If more than once a year, describe: **License-exempt providers receive two inspections each year after certification, one announced and one unannounced inspection.**

☐ Other. If other, describe:

- ii. Does the Lead Agency implement a differential monitoring approach when monitoring license-exempt family child care providers?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe how the differential monitoring approach is representative of the full complement of health and safety requirements.

☒ No.

- iii. Identify which department or agency is responsible for completing the inspections for license-exempt family child care providers. **The Lead Agency's Division of Licensing in the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education**

5.5.3 Inspections for CCDF license-exempt in-home child care providers

Lead Agencies may develop alternate monitoring requirements for care provided in the child's home that are appropriate to the setting. This flexibility cannot be used to bypass the monitoring requirement altogether.

- a. Describe the requirements for the annual monitoring of CCDF license-exempt in-home child care (care in the child's own home) providers, including if monitoring is announced or unannounced, occurs more frequently than once per year, and if differential monitoring procedures are used. **License-exempt providers receive two inspections each year after certification, one announced and unannounced inspection. Additional follow-up visits may be conducted as needed. Differential monitoring is not conducted at this time.**
- b. List the entity(ies) in your State/Territory responsible for conducting inspections of license-exempt CCDF in-home child care (care in the child's own home) providers: **The Lead Agency's Division of Licensing in the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education**

5.5.4 Posting monitoring and inspection reports

Lead Agencies must post monitoring and inspection reports on their consumer education website for each licensed and CCDF child care provider, except in cases where the provider is related to all the children in their care. These reports must include the results of required annual monitoring visits and visits due to major substantiated complaints about a provider's failure to comply with health and safety requirements and child care policies. A full report covers everything in the monitoring visit, including areas of compliance and non-compliance. If the Lead Agency does not produce any reports that include areas of compliance, the website must include information about all areas covered by a monitoring visit.

The reports must be in plain language or provide a plain language summary Lead Agency and be timely to ensure that the results of the reports are available and easily understood by parents when they are deciding on a child care provider. Lead Agencies must post at least 3 years of monitoring and inspection reports.

- a. Does the Lead Agency post:

- i. ☒ Pre-licensing inspection reports for licensed programs.

- ii. ☒ Full monitoring and inspection reports that include areas of compliance and non-compliance for all non-relative providers eligible to provide CCDF services.
 - iii. ☐ Monitoring and inspection reports that include areas of non-compliance only, with information about all areas covered by a monitoring visit posted separately on the website (e.g., a blank checklist used by monitors) for all non-relative providers eligible to provide CCDF services. If checked, provide a direct URL/website link to the website where a blank checklist is posted:
 - iv. ☐ Other. Describe:
- b. Check if the monitoring and inspection reports and any related plain language summaries include:
 - i. ☒ Date of inspection.
 - ii. ☒ Health and safety violations, including those violations that resulted in fatalities or serious injuries occurring at the provider. Describe how these health and safety violations are prominently displayed: **The inspection report provides the regulation that the provider was deficient in as well as the specific details regarding the violation.**
 - iii. ☒ Corrective action plans taken by the Lead Agency and/or child care provider. Describe: **In the statement of deficiencies, immediately following the deficient practice cited, is included the corrective action plan determined by the director, director designee, or owner to correct the issue is listed.**
 - iv. ☒ A minimum of 3 years of results, where available.
 - v. If any of the components above are not selected, please explain: **Not applicable**
- c. Lead Agencies must post monitoring and inspection reports and/or any related summaries in a timely manner.
 - i. Provide the direct URL/website link to where the reports are posted:
<https://louisianaschools.com/>
After selecting a site, a viewer can see the monitoring report under the ☑Inspections☑ tab.
 - ii. Identify the Lead Agency's established timeline for posting monitoring reports and describe how it is timely: **Generally the Lead Agency posts monitoring reports within the month of the monitoring visit but no later than 90 days after an inspection is made.**
- d. Does the Lead Agency certify that the monitoring and inspection reports or the summaries are in plain language that is understandable to parents and other consumers?
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- e. Does the Lead Agency certify that there is a process for correcting inaccuracies in the monitoring and inspection reports?
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:

- f. Does the Lead Agency maintain monitoring and inspection reports on the consumer education website?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

5.5.5 Qualifications and training of licensing inspectors

Lead Agencies must ensure that individuals who are hired as licensing inspectors (or qualified monitors designated by the Lead Agency) are qualified to inspect child care providers and facilities and have received health and safety training appropriate to the provider setting and age of the children served.

Describe how the Lead Agency ensures that licensing inspectors (or qualified monitors designated by the Lead Agency) are qualified and have received training on health and safety requirements that are appropriate to the age of the children in care and the type of provider setting. **The minimum requirement for a licensing inspector is a baccalaureate degree plus two years of professional level experience in hospital, nursing home, or child care center administration; public health; social services; family life education; early childhood development regulatory experience; administrative services; or teaching at the elementary or secondary level.**

Licensing specialists are trained on BESE Bulletins 137 and 139 and then gain inspection experience with a seasoned specialist for approximately four months. The Program Manager and Supervisor assess the new Licensing Specialist weekly. After approximately four months, the new Licensing Specialist is given his/her own caseload.

5.5.6 Ratio of licensing inspectors

Lead Agencies must ensure the ratio of licensing inspectors to child care providers and facilities in the State/Territory are maintained at a level sufficient to enable the Lead Agency to conduct effective inspections of child care providers and facilities on a timely basis in accordance with federal, State, and local laws.

Provide the ratio of licensing inspectors to child care providers (i.e., number of inspectors per number of child care providers) and facilities in the State/Territory and include how the ratio is sufficient to conduct effective inspections on a timely basis. **As of June 24, 2024, there are 1,815 providers and 27 Licensing Specialists positions; therefore, the ratio of licensed and license-exempt providers:licensing specialist is 67:1. Caseloads and monitoring visits are monitored by the Program Manager for completeness and timeliness. This ratio allows for high-priority monitoring visits for which need arises as well as annual inspections; therefore, it is felt to be sufficient.**

5.6 Ongoing Health and Safety Training

Lead Agencies must have ongoing training requirements for all caregivers, teachers, and directors of eligible CCDF providers for health and safety standards but have discretion on frequency and training content (e.g., pediatric CPR refresher every year and recertification every 2 years). Lead Agencies have discretion on which health and safety standards are subject to ongoing training. Lead Agencies may exempt relative providers from these requirements.

5.6.1 Required ongoing training of health and safety standards

Describe any required ongoing training of health and safety standards for caregivers, teachers, and directors of the following CCDF eligible provider types.

- a. Licensed child care centers: **All licensed CCDF providers must obtain a minimum of 12 clock hours of continuing education hours each year, which may be in the following areas: child development; child guidance; child abuse prevention; emergency preparation; licensing regulations; learning activities; health and safety; shaken baby prevention; CPR; first aid; management/administrative education; or college credit hours in child care, child development, and/or early childhood. Three additional hours must be in the areas of infectious diseases, health and safety, and/or food service preparation. Staff members who are neither left alone with children, nor have supervisory or disciplinary authority over children, must obtain a minimum of three clock hours of continuing education in job-related topics.**
- b. License-exempt child care centers: **All license-exempt child care centers must annually complete 12 clock hours of training in safety and health topics and job-related subject areas (which may include CPR and Pediatric First Aid, medication administration, emergency preparedness, food safety, and other health and safety topics required by CCDF) approved by the Department and the DCFS online mandated reporter training. Biannually the providers must obtain their certification in CPR and Pediatric First Aid.**
- c. Licensed family child care homes: **Not applicable**
- d. License-exempt family child care homes: **All license-exempt family child care home providers must annually obtain 12 clock hours of training in health and safety topics and job-related subject areas (which may include CPR and Pediatric First Aid, medication administration, emergency preparedness, food safety, and other health and safety topics required by CCDF) approved by the Department and the DCFS online mandated reporter training. Biannually the providers must obtain their certification in CPR and Pediatric First Aid.**
- e. Regulated or registered in-home child care: **All license-exempt in-home care providers must annually obtain 12 clock hours of training in health and safety topics and job-related subject areas (which may include CPR and Pediatric First Aid, medication administration, emergency preparedness, food safety, and other health and safety topics required by CCDF) approved by the Department and the DCFS online mandated reporter training. Biannually the providers must obtain their certification in CPR and Pediatric First Aid.**
- f. Non-regulated or registered in-home child care: **Not applicable**

5.7 Comprehensive Background Checks

Lead Agencies must conduct comprehensive background checks for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of all child care providers that are (1) licensed, regulated, or registered under State/Territory law, regardless of whether they receive CCDF funds; or (2) all other child care providers eligible to deliver CCDF services (e.g., license-exempt CCDF eligible child care providers). Family child care home providers must also submit background check requests for all household members age 18 or older.

A comprehensive background check must include: three in-state checks, two national checks, and three interstate checks if the individual resided in another State or Territory in the preceding 5 years. The background check components must be completed at least once every five years.

All child care staff members must receive a qualifying result from either the FBI criminal background check or an in-state fingerprint criminal history check before working (under supervision) with or near children. Lead Agencies must apply a CCDF-specific list of disqualifying crimes for child care providers serving families participating in CCDF.

These background check requirements do not apply to individuals who are related to all children for whom child care services are provided. Exemptions for relative providers will be addressed in subsection 5.8.

5.7.1 In-state criminal history check with fingerprints

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct in-state criminal history background checks with fingerprints for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct in-state criminal background checks with fingerprints.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct in-state criminal history background checks with fingerprints for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of all other child care providers eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers) other than relative providers?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct in-state criminal background checks with fingerprints.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct the in-state criminal background check with fingerprints for all individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home who do not receive an in-state criminal background check with fingerprints.

5.7.2 National Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) criminal history check with fingerprints

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct FBI criminal history background checks with fingerprints for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct FBI criminal background checks with fingerprints.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct FBI criminal history background checks with fingerprints for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of all other child care providers eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct FBI criminal background checks.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct the FBI criminal background check with fingerprints for all individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home who do not receive an FBI criminal background check with fingerprints.

5.7.3 National Crime Information Center (NCIC) National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) name-based check

The majority of NCIC NSOR records are fingerprint records and are automatically included in the FBI fingerprint criminal background check. But a small percentage of NCIC NSOR records are only name-based records and must be accessed through the required name-based search of the NCIC NSOR.

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct NCIC NSOR name-based background checks for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct NCIC NSOR name-based background checks.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct NCIC NSOR name-based background checks for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of all other child care providers eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct NCIC NSOR name-based background checks.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct the NCIC NSOR name-based background check for all individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home who do not receive a NCIC NSOR name-based background check.

5.7.4 In-state sex offender registry (SOR) check

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct in-state SOR checks for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct in-state SOR background checks.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct in-state SOR background checks for all child care staff

members (including prospective staff members) of all other child care providers eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct in-state SOR background checks.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct the in-state SOR background check for all individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home who do not receive an in-state SOR background check.

5.7.5 In-state child abuse and neglect (CAN) registry check

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct CAN registry checks for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct CAN registry checks.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct CAN registry checks for all child care staff members (including prospective staff members) of all other child care providers eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct CAN registry checks.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct the CAN registry check for all individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home who do not receive a CAN registry check.

5.7.6 Interstate criminal history check

These questions refer to requirements for a Lead Agency to conduct an interstate check for a child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) who currently lives in their State or Territory but has lived in another State, Territory, or Tribal land within the previous 5 years.

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct interstate criminal history background checks for any staff member (or prospective staff member) who resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct interstate criminal history background checks.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct interstate criminal history background checks for any staff member (or prospective staff member) who resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct interstate criminal history background checks.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct interstate criminal history background checks for all individuals age 18 or older who reside in a family child care home and resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe why individuals age 18 or older that resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years who reside in a family child care home that do not receive an interstate criminal history background check.

5.7.7 Interstate Sex Offender Registry (SOR) check

These questions refer to requirements for a Lead Agency to conduct an interstate check for a child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) who currently lives in their State or Territory but has lived in another State, Territory, or Tribal land within the previous 5 years.

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct interstate SOR checks for any staff member (or prospective staff member) who resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct interstate SOR checks.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct interstate SOR checks for any staff member (or prospective staff member) who resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct interstate SOR checks.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct the interstate SOR checks for all individuals age 18 or older who resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years who reside in a family child care home?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe individuals age 18 or older that resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years who reside in a family child care home that do not receive an interstate SOR check.

5.7.8 Interstate child abuse and neglect (CAN) registry check

These questions refer to requirements for a Lead Agency to conduct an interstate check for a child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) who currently lives in their State or Territory but has lived in another State, Territory, or Tribal land within the previous 5 years.

- a. Does the Lead Agency conduct interstate CAN registry checks for any staff member (or prospective staff member) that resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers, regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers for whom you do not conduct interstate CAN registry checks.

- b. Does the Lead Agency conduct interstate CAN registry checks for any staff member (or prospective staff member) who resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years eligible for CCDF participation (i.e., license-exempt providers)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any categories of child care providers eligible for CCDF participation for whom you do not conduct interstate CAN registry checks.

- c. Does the Lead Agency conduct the interstate CAN registry checks for all individuals age 18 or older who resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years who reside in a family child care home?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe individuals age 18 or older that resided in other state(s) in the past 5 years who reside in a family child care home that do not receive interstate CAN registry checks.

5.7.9 Disqualifications for child care employment

The Lead Agency must prohibit employment of individuals with child care providers receiving CCDF subsidy payment if they meet any of the following disqualifying criteria:

- Refused to consent to a background check.
- Knowingly made materially false statements in connection with the background check.
- Are registered, or are required to be registered, on the State/Territory sex offender registry or repository or the National Sex Offender Registry.
- Have been convicted of a felony consisting of murder, child abuse or neglect, crimes against children (including child pornography), spousal abuse, crimes involving rape or sexual assault, kidnapping, arson, physical assault, or battery.
- Have a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child, including the following crimes: child abuse, child endangerment, sexual assault, or any misdemeanor involving child pornography.
- Convicted of a felony consisting of a drug-related offense committed during the preceding 5 years.

- a. Does the Lead Agency disqualify the employment of child care staff members (including

prospective staff members) by child care providers receiving CCDF subsidy payment for CCDF-identified disqualifying criteria?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe the disqualifying criteria:

- b. Does the Lead Agency use the same criteria for licensed, regulated, and registered child care providers regardless of CCDF participation?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe any disqualifying criteria used for licensed, regulated, and registered child care providers:

- c. How does the Lead Agency use results from the in-state child abuse and neglect registry check?

☐ Does not use them to disqualify employment.

☒ Uses them to disqualify employment. If checked, describe: **Potential child care staff members with negative Child Abuse Neglect results are determined Ineligible for child care purposes.**

- d. How does the Lead Agency use results from the interstate child abuse and neglect registry check?

☐ Does not use them to disqualify employment.

☒ Uses them to disqualify employment. If checked, describe: **Potential child care staff members with negative Child Abuse Neglect results are determined Ineligible for child care purposes.**

5.7.10 Privacy

Lead Agencies must ensure the privacy of a prospective staff member by notifying child care providers of the individual's eligibility or ineligibility for child care employment based on the results of the comprehensive background check without revealing any documentation of criminal history or disqualifying crimes or other related information regarding the individual.

Does the Lead Agency certify they ensure the privacy of child care staff members (including prospective child care staff member) when providing the results of the comprehensive background check?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe the current process of notification:

5.7.11 Appeals processes for background checks

Lead Agencies must provide for a process that allows child care provider staff members (and prospective staff members) to appeal the results of a background check to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in the individual's background check report.

Does the appeals process:

- i. Provide the affected individual with information related to each disqualifying crime in a report, along with information/notice on the opportunity to appeal.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. Describe:

- ii. Provide the affected individual with clear instructions about how to complete the appeals process for each background check component if they wish to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such individual's background report.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. Describe:

- iii. Ensure the Lead Agency attempts to verify the accuracy of the information challenged by the individual, including making an effort to locate any missing disposition information related to the disqualifying crime.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. Describe:

- iv. Get completed in a timely manner.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. Describe:

- v. Ensure the affected individual receives written notice of the decision. In the case of a negative determination, the decision must indicate (1) the Lead Agency's efforts to verify the accuracy of information challenged by the individual, (2) any additional appeals rights available to the individual, and (3) information on how the individual can correct the federal or State records at issue in the case.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. Describe:

- vi. Facilitate coordination between the Lead Agency and other agencies in charge of background check information and results (such as the Child Welfare office and the State Identification Bureau), to ensure the appeals process is conducted in accordance with the Act.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. Describe:

5.7.12 Provisional hiring of prospective staff members

Lead Agencies must at least complete and receive a qualifying result for either the FBI criminal background check or a fingerprint-based in-state criminal background check where the individual resides before prospective staff members may provide services or be in the vicinity of children.

Until all the background check components have been completed, the prospective staff member must be supervised at all times by someone who has already received a qualifying result on a background check within the past five years.

Check all background checks for which the Lead Agency requires a qualifying result before a prospective child care staff member begins work with children.

- a. FBI criminal background check.
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- b. In-state criminal background check with fingerprints.
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- c. In-state Sex Offender Registry.
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- d. In-state child abuse and neglect registry.
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- e. Name-based national Sex Offender Registry (NCIC NSOR).
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- f. Interstate criminal background check, as applicable.
☐ Yes.
☒ No. If no, describe: **The Lead Agency submits a criminal history request to the state(s) the potential child care staff has resided in within the past five years. Potential child care staff who have passed the FBI criminal background check, in-state criminal background check, in-state Sex Offender Registry, in-state child abuse and neglect registry, name-based national Sex Offer Registry (NCIC NSOR), and interstate Sex Offender Registry check, are determined as "Provisional" hires until the criminal history is received from the interstate agency. A "Provisional" status allows an applicant to work as child care staff, but that "Provisional" child care staff member must be supervised and accompanied at all times.**
- g. Interstate Sex Offender Registry check, as applicable.
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- h. Interstate child abuse and neglect registry check, as applicable.
☐ Yes.
☒ No. If no, describe: **The Lead Agency submits a child abuse and neglect request to the state(s) the potential child care staff has resided in within the past five years. Potential child care staff who have passed the FBI criminal background check, in-state criminal background check, in-state Sex Offender Registry, in-state child abuse and neglect registry, name-based national Sex Offer Registry (NCIC NSOR), and interstate Sex Offender Registry check, are determined as "Provisional" hires until the child abuse and neglect**

results are received from the interstate agency. A "Provisional" status allows an applicant to work as child care staff, but that "Provisional" child care staff member must be supervised and accompanied at all times.

- i. Does the Lead Agency require provisional hires to be supervised by a staff member who received a qualifying result on the comprehensive background check while awaiting results from the provisional hire's full comprehensive background check?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

5.7.13 Completing the criminal background check within a 45-day timeframe

The Lead Agency must carry out a request from a child care provider for a criminal background check as expeditiously as possible, and no more than 45 days after the date on which the provider submitted the request

- a. Does the Lead Agency ensure background checks are completed within 45 days (after the date on which the provider submits the request)?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe the timeline for completion for categories of providers, including which background check components take more than 45 days.

- b. Does the Lead Agency ensure child care staff receive a comprehensive background check when they work in your State but reside in a different State?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe the current policy:

5.7.14 Responses to interstate background check requests

Lead Agencies must respond as expeditiously as possible to requests for interstate background checks from other States/Territories/Tribes in order to meet the 45-day timeframe.

- a. Does your State participate in the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact or National Fingerprint File programs?

☐ Yes.

☒ No.

- b. Describe how the State/Territory responds to interstate criminal history, Sex Offender Registry, and Child Abuse and Neglect Registry background check requests from another state. **Other states are instructed to submit criminal history and sex offender requests directly to the Louisiana State Police and child abuse and neglect background check requests directly to Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services.**

- c. Does your State/Territory have a law or policy that prevents a response to CCDF interstate background check requests from other States/Territories/Tribes?

☐ Yes. If yes, describe the current policy.

☒ No.

5.7.15 Consumer education website links to interstate background check processes

Lead Agencies must include on their consumer education website and the website of local Lead Agencies if the CCDF program is county-run, the policies and procedures related to comprehensive background checks. This includes the process by which a child care provider or other State or Territory may submit a background check request.

- a. Provide the direct URL/website link that contains instructions on how child care providers and other States and Territories should initiate background check requests for prospective and current child care staff members: **<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/early-childhood-programs/criminal-background-checks>**

Check to certify that the required elements are included on the Lead Agency's consumer and provider education website for each interstate background check component.

- b. Interstate criminal background check:

- i. ☒ Agency name
- ii. ☒ Address
- iii. ☒ Phone number
- iv. ☒ Email
- v. ☒ Website
- vi. ☒ Instructions
- vii. ☒ Forms
- viii. ☐ Fees
- ix. ☐ Is the State a National Fingerprint File (NFF) State?
- x. ☐ Is the State a National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact State?
- xi. If not all boxes above are checked, describe: **Fees are not included on the Lead Agency's website because requests for interstate criminal background checks are sent directly to the Louisiana State Police, so the Lead Agency refers its website users to https://lsp.org/media/5jbbmtqd/ldoe_out_of_state_authorization.pdf for up-to-date information; also, Louisiana is not a Compact or NFF state.**

- c. Interstate sex offender registry (SOR) check:

- i. ☒ Agency name
- ii. ☒ Address
- iii. ☒ Phone number
- iv. ☒ Email
- v. ☒ Website
- vi. ☐ Instructions
- vii. ☐ Forms
- viii. ☐ Fees

- ix. If not all boxes above are checked, describe: **Interstate agencies requesting SOR are instructed to contact the Louisiana State Police directly, to ensure that they receive up-to-date information.**
- d. Interstate child abuse and neglect (CAN) registry check:
 - i. ☒ Agency name
 - ii. ☒ Is the CAN check conducted through a county administered registry or centralized registry?
 - iii. ☒ Address
 - iv. ☒ Phone number
 - v. ☒ Email
 - vi. ☒ Website
 - vii. ☐ Instructions
 - viii. ☐ Forms
 - ix. ☐ Fees
 - x. If not all boxes above are checked, describe: **Interstate agencies are directed to access an online system managed by the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services to request child abuse and neglect results, in order to ensure they access up-to-date information.**

5.7.16 Background check fees

The Lead Agency must ensure that fees charged for completing the background checks do not exceed the actual cost of processing and administration.

Does the Lead Agency certify that background check fees do not exceed the actual cost of processing and administering the background checks?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe what is currently in place and what elements still need to be implemented:

5.7.17 Renewal of the comprehensive background check

Does the Lead Agency conduct the background check at least every 5 years for all components?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, what is the frequency for renewing each component?

5.8 Exemptions for Relative Providers

Lead Agencies may exempt relatives (defined in CCDF regulations as grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings if living in a separate residence, aunts, and uncles) from certain health and safety requirements. This exception applies only if the individual cares only for relative children.

5.8.1 Exemptions for relative providers

Does the Lead Agency exempt any federally defined relative providers from licensing requirements, the CCDF health and safety standards, preservice/orientation training, ongoing training, inspections, or background checks?

☒ No.

☐ Yes. If yes, which type of relatives do you exempt, and from what requirements (licensing requirements, CCDF health and safety standards, preservice/orientation training, ongoing training, inspections, and/or background checks) do you exempt them?

6 Support for a Skilled, Qualified, and Compensated Child Care Workforce

A skilled child care workforce with adequate wages and benefits underpins a stable high-quality child care system that is accessible and reliable for working parents and that meets their needs and promotes equal access. Positive interactions between children and caregivers provide the cornerstone of quality child care experiences. Responsive caregiving and rich interactions support healthy socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical development in children. Strategies that successfully support the child care workforce address key challenges, including low wages, poor benefits, and difficult job conditions. Lead Agencies can help mitigate some of these challenges through various CCDF policies, including through ongoing professional development and supports for all provider types and embedded in the payment policies and practices covered in Section 4. Lead Agencies must have a framework for training, professional development, and post-secondary education. They must also incorporate health and safety training into their professional development. Lead Agencies should also implement policies that focus on improving wages and access to benefits for the child care workforce. When implemented as a cohesive approach, the initiatives support the recruitment and retention of a qualified and effective child care workforce, and improve opportunities for caregivers, teachers, and directors to advance on their progression of training, professional development, and postsecondary education.

This section addresses Lead Agency efforts to support the child care workforce, the components and implementation of the professional development framework, and early learning and developmental guidelines.

6.1 Supporting the Child Care Workforce

Lead Agencies have broad flexibility to implement policies and practices to support the child care workforce.

6.1.1 Strategies to improve recruitment, retention, compensation, and well-being

- a. Identify any Lead Agency activities related to strengthening workforce recruitment and retention of child care providers. Check all that apply:
 - i. ☐ Providing program-level grants to support investments in staff compensation.
 - ii. ☐ Providing bonuses or stipends paid directly to staff, like sign-on or retention bonuses.
 - iii. ☐ Connecting family child care providers and center-based child care staff to health insurance or supporting premiums in the Marketplace.
 - iv. ☐ Subsidizing family child care provider and center-based child care staff retirement benefits.

- v. ☐ Providing paid sick, personal, and parental leave for family child care providers and center-based child care staff.
 - vi. ☐ Providing student loan debt relief or loan repayment for family child care providers and center-based child care staff.
 - vii. ☒ Providing scholarships or tuition support for center-based child care staff and family child care providers.
 - viii. ☒ Other. Describe: **To support recruitment and retention, the Lead Agency created an Early Childhood Workforce Recruitment and Retention Guidance document for community networks to share with program partners.**
- b. Describe any Lead Agency ongoing efforts and future plans to assess and improve the compensation of the child care workforce in the State or Territory, including increasing wages, bonuses, and stipends. **Currently, eligible lead teachers can receive the School Readiness Tax Credits based on their level on the state's career ladder. Teachers who qualify for School Readiness Tax Credits earn an increased tax credit amount by virtue of possessing the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate. Additionally, teachers earn increased tax credit levels by demonstrating that they have been in the child care field for multiple years, rewarding those teachers who have demonstrated a multi-year commitment to the field. Moreover, in 2022 the rates for Child Care Assistance Program seats were increased to provide site leaders with a higher and more stable subsidy. The Lead Agency has established a Workforce Stabilization Study Group, comprised of B-3 early learning teachers and site leaders as well as other strategic key partners, which meets several times per year and will study potential strategies to increase wages outside of tax credits.**
- c. Describe any Lead Agency ongoing efforts and future plans to expand access to benefits, including health insurance, paid sick, personal, and parental leave, and retirement benefits. **In 2023-2024, in an effort to increase access to health insurance for the child care workforce, the Lead Agency established a partnership with an independent non-profit whose mission is to improve health status through access to information, education, and health services and who held a Healthcare Navigator grant. These "Healthy Navigators" share affordable health insurance options for any person in Louisiana and, through the partnership with the Lead Agency, have made a targeted focus on the child care workforce. The Lead Agency will continue to share information about the program, for the duration of the Healthcare Navigator federal grant, with the child care workforce so that they can access the information and support they need to gain access to affordable health insurance that meets their needs.**
- d. Describe any Lead Agency ongoing efforts and future plans to support the mental health and well-being of the child care workforce. **The Lead Agency currently contracts with a vendor to provide mental health consultation support services for child care directors, teachers, children, and families through a nationally-acclaimed model for mental health consultation. The contractor provides services which promote the healthy development of young children, support teachers' and parents' ability to foster the well-being of young children, and provide referrals for treatment and/or design interventions for young children exhibiting challenging behaviors.**
- e. Describe any other strategies the Lead Agency is developing and/or implementing to support providers' recruitment and retention of the child care workforce. **The Lead**

Agency developed Workforce Support Modules that aim to support and improve the recruitment, hiring, retention, and evaluation of employees. The Lead Agency will offer these modules in multiple modalities over the next three years and ensure that every Child Care Resource and Referral agency offers multiple opportunities for directors to participate. The modules incorporate realistic scenarios and reflection on personal practices that come from Louisiana child care providers and module participants, national/state-wide data, and, for modules that are presented by a trainer/facilitator, resources to guide discussion and collaboration amongst participants, to share best practices. The Lead Agency may additionally offer these modules through a virtual option that can be taken asynchronously, as well as incorporate shorter lessons from the modules into recurring webinars, such as the Monthly Provider Update Webinar. The Lead Agency intends to incorporate follow-up with participants to track the impact of these modules on teacher retention, quality of instruction, and teacher turnover over the next three years.

6.1.2 Strategies to support provider business practices

- a. Describe other strategies that the Lead Agency is developing and/or implementing to strengthen child care providers' business management and administrative practices. **The Lead Agency has developed a series of Workforce Support Modules that will be administered in multiple modalities by both the LDOE and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. The content of these modules covers recruiting employees, hiring employees, retaining employees, and evaluating employees. All Type III center directors will be eligible to participate in these modules. In addition, the Lead Agency has established a Workforce Stabilization Study Group, comprised of B-3 early learning teachers and site leaders as well as other strategic key partners, which meets several times per year; the Lead Agency will continue to investigate with that group of key perspectives additional provider business practices that are most effective and work to share those identified practices with the field at-large.**

(The Lead Agency also previously implemented other strategies identified under 6.1.2.b.)

- b. Check the topics addressed in the Lead Agency's strategies for strengthening child care providers' administrative business practices. Check all that apply:
 - i. ☐ Fiscal management.
 - ii. ☐ Budgeting.
 - iii. ☐ Recordkeeping.
 - iv. ☒ Hiring, developing, and retaining qualified staff.
 - v. ☐ Risk management.
 - vi. ☐ Community relationships.
 - vii. ☐ Marketing and public relations.
 - viii. ☐ Parent-provider communications.
 - ix. ☐ Use of technology in business administration.
 - x. ☐ Compliance with employment and labor laws.

- xi. [] Other. Describe any other efforts to strengthen providers' administrative business:

6.1.3 Strategies to support provider participation

Lead Agencies must facilitate participation of child care providers and staff with limited English proficiency and disabilities in the child care subsidy system. Describe how the Lead Agency will facilitate this participation, including engagement with providers to identify barriers and specific strategies used to support their participation:

- a. Providers and staff with limited English proficiency: **For purposes of translation and recruitment of participating providers, the Lead Agency uses Language Link, which can provide translation for more than 240 languages/dialects. This contract can be used to provide information, such as applications, in other languages and can be applied to any document or resources needed. As needed CCR&Rs also provide language interpretation and translation services, such as interpretation apps, during meetings and training sessions. Written material and communication is provided in the primary language of the provider or staff member. In addition, training sessions are offered to staff on understanding various perspectives and communication styles to ensure competency and sensitivity. Finally, CCR&Rs collaborate with local organizations and community groups that specialize in supporting providers and staff with limited English proficiency, who can provide additional resources and expertise.**
- b. Providers and staff who have disabilities: **The Lead Agency website has been verified for accessibility for individuals with disabilities or additional interpretation needs. The LDOE is prepared to support additional requests from individuals with disabilities. CCR&Rs work with directors to develop individualized support plans that address the specific needs and accommodations of staff who have a disability. This may include flexible scheduling, specialized equipment, or assistive technology. Additionally, directors are supported in providing the appropriate accommodations to ensure that physical spaces, materials, and digital platforms are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including wheelchair ramps and screen reader compatibility. Furthermore, CCR&RS work with local organizations and community groups that specialize in supporting individuals with disabilities to connect providers and staff who have disabilities with additional resources and accommodations.**

6.2 Professional Development Framework

A Lead Agency must have a professional development framework for training, professional development, and post-secondary education for caregivers, teachers, and directors in child care programs that serve children of all ages. The framework must include these components:

(1) professional standards and competencies, (2) career pathways, (3) advisory structures, (4) articulation, (5) workforce information, and (6) financing. CCDF provides Lead Agencies flexibility on the strategies, breadth, and depth of the framework. The professional development framework must be developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care or a similar coordinating body.

6.2.1 Updates and consultation

- a. Did the Lead Agency make any updates to the professional development framework since the FFY 2022-2024 CCDF Plan was submitted?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe the elements of the framework that were updated and describe if and how the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (if applicable) or similar coordinating body was consulted: **The Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council is the designated statewide early childhood council tasked with reviewing all policies related to early learning sites. They have reviewed and endorsed the requirements for ongoing continuing education, the structure for the Louisiana Pathways Career Development System, and the creation of the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate and Birth to Kindergarten Pathway.**

Since the submission of the 2022-2024 CCDF State Plan, the Lead Agency has incorporated into professional development for teachers and directors of child care programs, through the CCR&Rs, Master Coaches who use data-driven planning to establish coaching caseloads at high-priority sites, monitor the effectiveness of coaching across the CCR&R service area(s), support continuous growth of the coaching staff, and develop best practices and coaching competencies. In addition, the Master Coaches evaluate for success by reviewing data based on tailored coaching specific to the needs of the recipient or by observing changes in recipient practice through on-site coaching and training.

Also since the submission of the 2022-2024 CCDF State Plan, through engagement with relevant stakeholders, the Lead Agency has updated the career pathway ladder for Family Child Care, to mirror the center-based teacher track while also providing an alternative way for those who have not yet had time (or incentive) to further their education to begin participating in the incentive system to increase access in communities.

☐ No.

- b. Did the Lead Agency consult with other key groups in the development of their professional development framework?

☒ Yes. If yes, identify the other key groups: **In addition to consulting the statewide Advisory Council, the Lead Agency consulted on ongoing continuing education with key provider groups and stakeholders. Further, the Lead Agency will continue to consult with early care and education stakeholders concerning the future development of the state's Professional Development Framework (such as professional standards and competencies), to serve as a guide for those who work in the state.**

☐ No.

6.2.2 Description of the professional development framework

- a. Describe how the Lead Agency's framework for training and professional development addresses the following required elements:
- i. Professional standards and competencies. For example, Lead Agencies can include information about which roles in early childhood education are included (such as teachers, directors, infant and toddler specialists, mental health consultants, coaches, licensors, QIS assessors, family service workers, home visitors). **Louisiana has developed a set of teacher competencies (<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/teaching/teacher-preparation-competencies.pdf?sfvrsn=4>) which span grades birth-12 and include a set of competencies specific to early childhood teachers. These competencies are**

part of teacher preparation policy and are used to drive the design of teacher preparation programs, including early childhood teacher preparation programs.

As a minimum standard of these teacher competencies, beginning in July 2019, lead teachers in Type III child care centers have been required to have their Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate (ECAC) or be on track to obtain their ECAC within 24 months of starting their job as a lead teacher. Teachers earn their ECAC through the completion of a state board-approved, CDA-based teacher preparation program and are eligible to receive scholarship funding. These state-approved ECAC programs are reviewed by the state to ensure alignment between teacher competencies, the Early Learning and Development Standards, and the key skills and strategies required to lead successful adult-child interactions to support child learning.

Additionally, the LDOE has created a Professional Learning Partner Guide. This guide features vendors of professional development birth-grade 12, including approved ECAC providers, that have been reviewed to support the key focus areas for the Lead Agency. Early Childhood programs are encouraged to select professional development (for teachers, directors, coaches, or others) from the Professional Learning Partner Guide.

Furthermore, staff, including directors, are annually required to obtain 12 clock hours by the expiration of the site's license. The continuing education hours must be in the areas of child development, child guidance, child abuse prevention, emergency preparation, licensing regulations, learning activities, health and safety, shaken baby prevention, CPR, first aid, management / administrative education, or college credit hours in child care, child development, and/or early childhood.

All QRIS assessors who conduct observations using the CLASS® tool are required to obtain observer reliability (certification). This is achieved by attending a two- to three-day training and passing a reliability test. This reliability test must be passed annually in order to continue conducting QRIS observations. Local agencies also conduct bi-annual training, called calibration training, for all observers in all age bands (infant, toddler, and pre-K) to ensure local QRIS assessors maintain accuracy and reliability.

- ii. Career pathways. For example, Lead Agencies can include information about professional development registries, career ladders, and levels. **All lead teachers working in Type III child care centers are required to have the Louisiana Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate (ECAC), which can be earned by successfully completing a board-approved CDA-based program.** There are board-approved ECAC programs available statewide, and scholarships are available to cover the full costs of attending the program, making this credential easily accessible to lead teachers in the state. In addition to the ECAC, teachers can continue to supplement their professional growth through training offered by Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, as well as by the Lead Agency's free, self-paced training courses offered online.

In addition to continuing education opportunities, the Lead Agency works with a contractor to maintain an early childhood workforce registry. The Louisiana Pathways Career Development System enrolls both center-based child care and family child care teachers and leaders and documents their professional educational background and experience based on the degrees and professional credentials they have earned. Louisiana Pathways Career ladders are designed for administrators, child care center classroom teachers, and family child care educators who provide care in their own home. The career ladder for child care teachers is aligned with that of the degrees awarded in the Birth to Kindergarten Pathway.

In addition to the career ladder recognition offered by the Louisiana Pathways Career Development System, enrolled participants may be eligible for School Readiness Tax Credits based on their level on the career ladder. Teachers that qualify for School Readiness Tax Credits earn an increased tax credit amount by virtue of possessing the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate. Additionally, teachers earn increased tax credit levels by demonstrating that they have been in the child care field for multiple years, rewarding those teachers who have demonstrated a multi-year commitment to the field.

The career ladder for directors promotes professional learning and service. In order to progress to a higher level (levels 3 and 4) along the career ladder, directors must maintain membership in an organization in addition to providing service to the profession by presenting at or attending a professional conference, serving on a board or committee related to early childhood, serving as a Professional Development Specialist for the CDA Council, or conducting CLASS® observations. Moreover, to progress to a higher level along the career ladder, directors must also obtain a higher level of education or be a director of a high-quality rated center for at least one year.

- iii. Advisory structure. For example, Lead Agencies can include information about how the professional development advisory structure interacts with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. **The Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council reviews all early childhood policy proposals prior to review by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. For example, when the state revised the requirements for lead teachers in Type III centers, changes were first reviewed and recommended by the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council prior to approval from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council receives quarterly reports on the number of active state-board approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate programs and annual reports on the number of teachers that have earned their Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate. The Lead Agency has also established a Workforce Stabilization Study Group that is providing a broad range of guidance to the Lead Agency, including how professional development influences workforce recruitment and retention.**
- iv. Articulation. For example, Lead Agencies can include information about articulation agreements, and collaborative agreements that support progress

in degree acquisition. For teachers looking to grow beyond the minimum standards of effective practice and training, Louisiana is engaging all stakeholders to create a smooth pathway from initial credential (ECAC) to an Associate's degree and a Bachelor's degree through Louisiana's Birth to Kindergarten Career Pathway. The Birth to Kindergarten Career Pathway can begin with an Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate and end with a Birth to Kindergarten teaching license, which was created through Bulletin 746. The Lead Agency is working with the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Louisiana Community & Technical College System, and institutions of higher education to refine this framework and identify opportunities to create further stackable credentials and coursework, ultimately creating a clear path for early childhood professionals to grow their knowledge and credentials as they work with young learners.

The Lead Agency and Board of Regents will also work to expand the framework to include a pathway for high school students to begin coursework for their Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate and earn college credit which can be transferred to all technical colleges and institutions of higher education in Louisiana.

- v. Workforce information. For example, Lead Agencies can include information about workforce demographics, educator well-being, retention/turnover surveys, actual wage scales, and/or access to benefits. **The Lead Agency contracts with a vendor to implement the Louisiana Pathways Early Learning Career Development System (LPEDS), the workforce registry for early childhood professionals in Louisiana. This registry collects and records information submitted by early childhood directors, teachers, family child care providers, and other early childhood professionals for the purposes of leveling these individuals in the Career Development System. Information collected includes demographics, level of education, certifications, training records, and years of experience in the field of early childhood care and education.**
- vi. Financing. For example, Lead Agencies can include information about strategies including scholarships, apprenticeships, wage enhancements, etc. **Child care teachers who work in publicly-funded sites are eligible to receive Louisiana Pathways Scholarships when they meet the criteria determined by the Lead Agency for LA Pathways and are employed for at least 16 hours per week in a Type III center or are a registered Family Child Care provider with Academic Approval, working an average of 30 hours a week. Pathways Scholarships pay the full cost for qualified candidates to attend one of the state-approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate programs. They may also be used to cover the costs of college tuition or to pay for the CDA exam and certification fee. Louisiana Pathways scholarships may also be used to pay for administrative training.**

The Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate is processed and awarded at no cost to the applying early childhood educator, unlike other teacher certifications. This is an effort to reduce any possible cost or burden on the child care workforce population.

- b. Does the Lead Agency use additional elements?

☒ Yes.

If yes, describe the element(s). Check all that apply.

- i. ☒ Continuing education unit trainings and credit-bearing professional development. Describe: **Child care teachers who attend a state-approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate program are able to use these professional training hours to meet their continuing education hour requirements for licensing.**
- ii. ☐ Engagement of training and professional development providers, including higher education, in aligning training and educational opportunities with the Lead Agency's framework. Describe:
- iii. ☐ Other. Describe:
- ☐ No.

6.2.3 Impact of the Professional Development Framework

Describe how the framework improves the quality, stability, and retention of caregivers, teachers, and directors and identify what data are available to assess the impact.

- a. Professional standards and competencies. For example, do the professional standards and competencies reflect the range of providers across role, child care setting, or age of children served? **The framework promotes the gaining of additional knowledge around supporting child development, for all children, by teachers across child care settings, through both the ongoing knowledge and professional development attained over lengthier experience in the field and scholarships to earn the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate and possibly beyond. Scholarships and ongoing professional development enable the teachers who are serving publicly-funded children to increase their competencies to support child development, at no cost to the teacher or to the site. These competencies cover a variety of age-appropriate topics including safe and healthy learning environments, building productive relationships with families, maintaining professionalism, and advancing children's physical and intellectual development. Professional development is applicable to providers across their roles and for the diversity of families and children which they serve (e.g., infants, toddlers, preschoolers, children that are English language learners, and young children with disabilities).**
- b. Career pathways. For example, has the Lead Agency developed a wage ladder that provides progressively higher wages as early educators gain more experience and credentials? What types of child care settings and staff roles are addressed in career pathways, such as licensed centers and family child care homes? **The Lead Agency offers career pathways ladders for teachers, directors, and family child care educators. These ladders are used to determine eligibility for early childhood educators to earn fully-refundable tax credits through the School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTCs). Depending on the level of professional education a teacher has received, teachers are eligible for increased amount levels of a refundable tax credit. Furthermore, Louisiana child care teachers earn increased tax credit amounts for obtaining their Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate: the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate allows teachers to immediately qualify for the second level of SRTC. Finally, teachers qualify for increased amounts of SRTC if they remain working in the child care field, eventually reaching level four (the highest level) by demonstrating that they have their Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate and that they have earned the SRTC one or two years prior (thereby signifying their ongoing participation in the field).**

- c. **Advisory structure.** For example, has the advisory structure identified goals for child care workforce compensation, including types of staff and target compensation levels? Does the Lead Agency have a Preschool Development Birth-to-Five grant and is part of its scope of work child care compensation activities? Are they represented in the advisory structure? **Through a Preschool Development Birth-to-5 Planning Grant, the Lead Agency created a Workforce Stabilization Study Group (WSSG) comprised of early childhood experts who work in or directly support the field. The WSSG was tasked with reviewing research and exploring the impacts of workforce support and stabilization strategies used locally and nationally, applying the knowledge gained to field-based realities. The insights from WSSG were shared with a larger group, called the Impact Team, made up of stakeholders who work at local and state agencies such as the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Louisiana Board of Regents, and institutions of higher education. Participants on the Impact Team have been tasked with reviewing the field-based perspectives, promising practices, and recommendations provided by the WSSG, using this information to inform policy recommendations and develop strategies to address Louisiana’s workforce needs while considering field-based realities. The Lead Agency will use the information and recommendations developed by the WSSG and Impact team to develop goals for compensation and other workforce-specific needs.**
- d. **Articulation.** For example, how does the advisory structure include training and professional development for providers, including higher education, to assist in aligning training and education opportunities? **The Impact Team includes members from institutions of higher education, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, the Board of Regents (the coordinating board for higher education), and the Louisiana Workforce Commission. The Lead Agency will use insights from the Impact Team to guide future training and professional development opportunities through Pathways Scholarships and the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate program. The Lead Agency will also use insights from the Impact Team to guide increased collaboration with the Louisiana Workforce Commission, to identify additional resources to support the development of an early childhood teacher pipeline, and with the Louisiana Board of Regents, to develop strategies for the creation or expansion of stackable credentials.**
- e. **Workforce information.** For example, does the Lead Agency have data on the existing wages and benefits available to the child care workforce? Do any partners such as the Quality Improvement System, child care resource and referral agencies, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and universities and research organizations collect compensation and benefits data? Does the Lead Agency monitor child care workforce wages and access to benefits through ongoing data collection and evaluation? Can the data identify any disparities in the existing compensation and benefits (by geography, role, child care setting, race, ethnicity, gender, or age of children served)? **Though the Lead Agency hopes to solidify methods of gathering this information in the future, the Lead Agency knows through local anecdotal and survey data as well as national data that the majority of early childhood educators are not provided with benefits from their employers. This knowledge was the catalyst for a partnership that began in April 2023 between the Lead Agency and a nonprofit organization operating a Healthcare Navigators program. The Lead Agency and that organization are striving to collect more data about the number of educators who register for health insurance after interacting with the Healthcare Navigators.**

The Lead Agency also partnered with The University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) to

conduct a research study of approximately 3,000 teachers to evaluate the impact of increased compensation on retention. Half of the experimental group received a \$2,080 annual increase, and the other half received a 10% annual pay increase. Additionally, a control group of no pay increase participated and received compensation for quarterly surveys. The pilot will end in 2024, and the ULL team will provide the Lead Agency information about the impact of increased pay on teacher retention.

- f. Financing. For example, has the Lead Agency set a minimum or living wage as a floor for all child care staff? Do Lead Agency-provider subsidy agreements contain requirements for staff compensation levels? Do Lead Agencies provide program-level compensation grants to support staff base salaries and benefits? Does the Lead Agency administer bonuses or stipends directly to workers? **The Lead Agency does not currently set a minimum or living wage as a floor for all child care staff or provide requirements for staff compensation levels. The state does provide program-level compensation, through School Readiness Tax Credits, that can be used to support staff base salaries and benefits, and the state does administer bonuses or stipends directly to staff, through School Readiness Tax Credits.**

6.3 Ongoing Training and Professional Development

6.3.1 Required hours of ongoing training

Provide the number of hours of ongoing training required annually for CCDF-eligible providers in the following settings:

- a. Licensed child care centers: **12**
- b. License-exempt child care centers: **not applicable**
- c. Licensed family child care homes: **not applicable**
- d. License-exempt family child care homes: **12**
- e. Regulated or registered in-home child care: **12**
- f. Non-regulated or registered in-home child care: **not applicable**

6.3.2 Accessibility of professional development for Tribal organizations

Describe how the Lead Agency's training and professional development are accessible to providers supported through Indian tribes or Tribal organizations receiving CCDF funds (as applicable). **All providers that receive CCDF-funded seats have access to professional development, including technical assistance, training, coaching and other supports, through Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies. Tribal organizations that have child care sites that are eligible to receive CCDF-funded seats are able to access and participate in these supports.**

6.3.3 Professional development appropriate for the children, families, and child care providers

Describe how the Lead Agency's training and professional development requirements reflect the range of children, families, and child care providers participating in CCDF. To the extent practicable, how does professional development include specialized training or credentials for providers who care for infants or school-age children; individuals with limited English proficiency; children who are bilingual; children with developmental delays or disabilities; and/or Native Americans, including Indians, as the term is defined in Section 900.6 in subpart B of the Indian

Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (including Alaska Natives) and Native Hawaiians? **On behalf of the Lead Agency, Child Care Resource & Referral agencies provide trainings, which are Lead Agency-developed Key Training Modules or Contractor-developed modules, that represent a broad range of topics to reflect the needs of diverse child care experience levels, roles, and sites and that meet these professional development requirements for providers. These vendors also provide a monthly schedule of training content based on the community-level need, Lead Agency initiatives, community request, and established quality goals. Special care is taken to ensure training opportunities related to infants and toddlers, as well as family child care, are offered each month. Training opportunities are also linked to CDA Content Areas and include topics related to building productive relationships with families, including engaging with families from different backgrounds and ways to promote positive relationships with families from differing backgrounds.**

Additionally, the Lead Agency’s Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate programs are based on the CDA content areas. Participation in these programs ensures that Lead Teachers in child care classrooms receive professional development in the CDA Content Areas, which include understanding principles of child development and learning, observing children's behavior to identify developmental delays and individualize teaching to support and advance children's physical and intellectual development, for infants as well as toddlers and preschoolers.

Additionally, the Lead Agency ensures that children in child care sites have access to developmental screenings with at least one staff member from each Child Care Resource and Referral Agency trained via a train-the-trainer program.

6.3.4 Child developmental screening

Describe how all providers receive, through training and professional development, information about: (1) existing resources and services the State/Territory can make available in conducting developmental screenings and providing referrals to services when appropriate for children who receive assistance under this part, including the coordinated use of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and developmental screening services available under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.); and (2) how child care providers may utilize these resources and services to obtain developmental screenings for children who receive assistance and who may be at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays, which may include social, emotional, physical, or linguistic delays: **In local-level community networks Part C representatives (from the statewide system, called EarlySteps) participate as a program partner alongside child care providers. The Lead Agency, and many community network lead agencies, administer Part B services; regardless of who serves as the community network leadership, Part B representatives also participate in the local-level community networks as a program partner alongside child care. This familiarity and partnering among Part C, Part B, and child care providers means that information about developmental screening resources, referrals, and services and how to utilize them is shared with child care providers.**

The Lead Agency provides guidance to all community network lead agencies on the transition process from Part C to Part B services through the “Early Childhood Transition Process” guidance document, available via the Lead Agency’s website. The Lead Agency monitors compliance of the transition process from Part C to Part B services through the state data system, eSER (Enhanced

Special Education Reporting System). Child care providers and community network lead agencies can participate in Part B services by attending Part C transition conferences to assist in developing and implementing an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) by the child's third birthday. In the event that the local Part B provider does not attend the transition conference, the local Part B provider (who is often the same as the community network lead agency) will initiate their own conference with the family to transition from Part C to determine eligibility for services in Part B. The partnership between Part C and Part B builds the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers by promoting the importance of developmental screening, early intervention, and resources that meet the needs of young children with disabilities.

The Lead Agency publishes an annual Developmental Screening Guidebook that serves as a reference point for providers and families and outlines how to best support healthy growth and development of children throughout key developmental intervals, helps provide guidelines on how to identify children who may benefit from specialized support, and gives providers guidance on developmental screening processes and practices. Furthermore, the Developmental Screening Guidebook outlines ways providers can establish a referral process after screening is complete.

The Lead Agency conducts periodic meetings and outreach with community networks in order to assess community training needs in the area of developmental screening. These outreach practices provide the Lead Agency with the opportunity to assess the need for annual professional development opportunities for ASQ-3 Training of Trainers to support new Early Childhood staff and staff that may need up-to-date training. The Lead Agency will continue to provide ongoing technical assistance and guidance for developmental screening to early childhood community networks who train providers in turn, to ensure that young children with disabilities are identified early and accurately. The Lead Agency will also continue to provide professional development to prepare educators with strategies that ensure that young children with disabilities have access to high-quality inclusive early learning experiences and opportunities.

6.4 Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines

Lead Agencies must develop, maintain, or implement early learning and developmental guidelines appropriate for children from birth to kindergarten entry. Early learning and developmental guidelines should describe what children should know and be able to do at different ages and cover the essential domains of early childhood development, which at a minimum includes cognition, including language arts and mathematics; social, emotional, and physical development; and approaches toward learning.

6.4.1 Early learning and developmental guidelines

- a. Check the boxes below to certify the Lead Agency's early learning and developmental guidelines are:
 - i. ☒ Research-based.
 - ii. ☒ Developmentally appropriate.
 - iii. ☒ Culturally and linguistically appropriate.
 - iv. ☒ Aligned with kindergarten entry.

- v. ☒ Appropriate for all children from birth to kindergarten entry.
 - vi. ☒ Implemented in consultation with the educational agency and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care or similar coordinating body.
 - vii. If any components above are not checked, describe:
- b. Check the boxes below to certify that the required domains are included in the Lead Agency's early learning and developmental guidelines.
- i. ☒ Cognition, including language arts and mathematics.
 - ii. ☒ Social development.
 - iii. ☒ Emotional development.
 - iv. ☒ Physical development.
 - v. ☒ Approaches toward learning.
 - vi. ☒ Other optional domains. Describe any optional domains: ***Creative Arts: Children engage in music, movement, dramatic play, and visual arts**
***Science: Children explore developmentally-appropriate scientific inquiries and scientific observations**
***Social Studies: Children demonstrate a developmentally-appropriate awareness of time and place, family, and community**
 - vii. If any components above are not checked, describe:
- c. When were the Lead Agency's early learning and developmental guidelines most recently updated and for what reason? **Louisiana's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) were initially developed in 2013, with the passage of Louisiana's Act 3 in 2012, and were based on extensive research, which included consulting experts and working with other states' standards and policy statements from state and national organizations. Beginning in 2021, the Lead Agency began the process of reviewing and revising the ELDS to further support the Lead Agency's critical goal of kindergarten readiness and to align the ELDS review process to the K-12 content standard review policy. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved the process to review Louisiana's Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards in January 2021 by opening an application to the public to participate in the Early Learning and Development Standards Review Committee, inviting all interested early childhood educators, leaders, experts, families, and community members. In 2023, revised ELDS were approved by BESE. In 2024 additional revisions were approved by BESE, and implementation of the new standards will begin in the 2024-2025 academic year.**
- d. Provide the Web link to the Lead Agency's early learning and developmental guidelines.
<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academic-standards/early-childhood---birth-to-five-standards.pdf>

6.4.2 Use of early learning and developmental guidelines

- a. Describe how the Lead Agency uses its early learning and developmental guidelines. **Louisiana's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) are used as a reference and resource for those responsible for the care and education of young children. The**

Louisiana ELDS is divided into five age levels: infants (birth to 11 months), young toddlers (9 to 18 months), older toddlers (16 to 36 months), three-year-olds (36 to 48 months), and four year-olds (48 to 60 months). These age levels were selected because they represent developmentally-significant periods in a young child's life and the ages typically served by Louisiana's early childhood mixed delivery system. Louisiana's ELDS also remind educators that young children's development is often uneven and progresses at different rates—that children may change dramatically in one area while development progresses more slowly in another area, and that children with disabilities may demonstrate even greater variation in their abilities to progress and reach developmental milestones. Because children develop at different rates, there is overlap at the youngest age levels of the ELDS (birth to 11 months/infants; 9 to 18 months/young toddlers; and 16 to 36 months/older toddlers). The overlap reflects the fact that it is typical for children this age to vary when demonstrating the skills and behaviors described in the Indicators.

- b. Check the boxes below to certify that CCDF funds are not used to develop or implement an assessment for children that:
 - i. ☒ Will be the primary or sole basis to determine a child care provider ineligible to participate in the CCDF.
 - ii. ☒ Will be used as the primary or sole basis to provide a reward or sanction for an individual provider.
 - iii. ☒ Will be used as the primary or sole method for assessing program effectiveness.
 - iv. ☒ Will be used to deny children eligibility to participate in CCDF.
 - v. If any components above are not checked, describe:

7 Quality Improvement Activities

The quality of child care directly affects children's safety and healthy development while in care settings, and high-quality child care can be foundational across the lifespan. Lead Agencies may use CCDF for quality improvement activities for all children in care, not just those receiving child care subsidies. OCC will collect the most detailed Lead Agency information about quality improvement activities in annual reports instead of this Plan.

Lead Agencies must report on CCDF child care quality improvement investments in three ways:

1. In this Plan, Lead Agencies will describe the types of activities supported by quality investments over the 3-year period.
2. An annual expenditure report (the ACF-696). Lead Agencies will provide data on how much CCDF funding is spent on quality activities. This report will be used to determine compliance with the required quality and infant and toddler spending requirements.
3. An annual Quality Progress Report (the ACF-218). Lead Agencies will provide a description of activities funded by quality expenditures, the measures used to evaluate its progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services within the State/Territory, and progress or barriers encountered on

those measures.

In this section of the Plan, Lead Agencies will describe their quality activities needs assessment and identify the types of quality improvement activities where CCDF investments are being made using quality set-aside funds.

7.1 Quality Activities Needs Assessment

7.1.1 Needs assessment process and findings

- a. Describe the Lead Agency needs assessment process for expending CCDF funds on activities to improve the quality of child care, including the frequency of assessment, how a range of parents and providers were consulted, and how their views are incorporated: **Following the passage of Act 3 in 2012, a law intended to create and maintain a statewide, integrated early childhood care and education network and establish uniform standards for quality early child education and of readiness for Kindergarten, the Lead Agency conducted a series of statewide road shows and feedback opportunities to determine how quality would be assessed in Louisiana; a diverse range of hundreds of providers, parents, advocates, and other stakeholders were consulted through those opportunities and gave feedback that was incorporated into the design of the present QRIS.**

In that QRIS, to assess quality, every classroom in publicly-funded sites is observed at least twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. The two observations of each classroom are used to calculate a Performance Score and Rating for each site in Louisiana. These Performance Profiles include two key components: a rating based on scores from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) and information on classroom best practices. Annually the Lead Agency uses data-driven determinations from Performance Scores to determine high-priority active coaching sites and training needs. Sites identified as high-priority receive ongoing quality improvement support, which includes individual or small group training and coaching to improve teacher-child interactions and high-quality experiences as well as program leaders' abilities to support quality.

More recently, to support the distribution of ARPA funds, the Lead Agency held many stakeholder focus groups and opened a statewide survey (participated in by hundreds of stakeholders) that included questions about any additional needed quality supports and activities. The Lead Agency also conducts ongoing needs assessment as part of its Preschool Development Grant work and ongoing collaboration with community networks, ongoing collaboration with provider groups, and ongoing reporting to the state Advisory Council.

- b. Describe the findings of the assessment, including any findings related to needs of different populations and types of providers, and if any overarching goals for quality improvement were identified: **Scores from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) provide information on the quality of child-teacher interactions in each infant, toddler, and pre-K classroom. Infant classrooms are assessed on the relational climate, teacher sensitivity, facilitated exploration, and early language support dimensions. Toddler classrooms are assessed on the positive climate, negative climate, regard for child's perspectives, behavior guidance, teacher sensitivity, facilitation of learning & development, quality of feedback, and language modeling dimensions. Pre-K classrooms**

are assessed on the positive climate, negative climate, teacher sensitivity, regard for child perspectives, behavior management, productivity, instructional learning formats, concept development, quality of feedback, and language modeling dimensions.

Each year the Lead Agency uses data-driven planning, based on these composite CLASS® scores, to assess all sites and develop high-priority coaching and technical support caseloads for each Child Care Resource & Referral agency. The Lead Agency provides each CCR&R a toolkit that includes relative data to support the determination of the dosage and frequency of each provider site's intervention plan, including an assessment of the needs of each early learning site. Although the "Negative Climate" dimension score is not included in the Performance Score for sites, the Lead Agency takes action when observations indicate a high Negative Climate score.

Other selected high-priority sites include both Site Improvement Planning (SIP) sites and sites flagged based on the key quality indicators. The SIP process was developed by the Department in 2017-2018 for publicly-funded sites rated below 3.75 for the previous academic year, to support against further decline in quality. Sites participating in the SIP process are assigned a Lead Agency field support consultant who assists in creating an improvement plan based on individualized site needs and self-assessment results. These sites receive prioritized resources that are included as part of improvement plans (e.g., CLASS®-based coaching, curriculum support, mental health consultation, and professional development).

Since Performance Ratings were first issued in 2016-2017, the number of sites rated "Unsatisfactory" and "Approaching Proficient" has declined, with no sites rated as "Unsatisfactory" in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Furthermore, the number of sites rated as "High Proficient" and "Excellent" has increased significantly, with more than 65% of sites earning this rating. Only 10 sites scored below 3.75 and were mandated to participate in the Site Improvement Planning (SIP) process for the 2022-2023 academic year based on their CLASS® observation results in 2021-2022.

7.2 Use of Quality Set-Aside Funds

Lead Agencies must use a portion of their CCDF expenditures for activities designed to improve the quality of child care services and to increase parental options for and access to high-quality child care. They must use the quality set-aside funds on at least one of 10 activities described in CCDF and the quality activities must be aligned with a Statewide or Territory-wide assessment of the State's or Territory's need to carry out such services and care.

7.2.1 Quality improvement activities

- a. Describe how the Lead Agency will make its Quality Progress Report (ACF – 218) and expenditure reports, available to the public. Provide a link if available. **The Lead Agency will post its annual Quality Progress Report (ACF - 218) and CCDF expenditure reports on the Lead Agency website (<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/early-childhood-policy-guidance>).**
- b. Identify Lead Agency plans, if any, to spend CCDF funds for each of the following quality

improvement activities. If an activity is checked “yes”, describe the Lead Agency’s current and/or future plans for this activity.

- i. Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce, including birth to five and school-age providers.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **The Lead Agency supports the training and professional development of the child care workforce through multiple strategies:**

The Lead Agency contracts with Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to provide group training and professional development to the child care workforce that includes best practices related to child development, curriculum, and teacher-child interactions. Furthermore, one-on-one in-field coaching in child care sites provides support tailored to the specific needs of the recipient inclusive of modeling lessons, co-teaching, lesson planning, and providing feedback opportunities. This practice-based coaching model addresses improving teacher skills and learning environments, high-quality instruction, and the assessment of children’s developmental needs and improving directors’ instructional leadership.

The Lead Agency contracts with a mental health consultation vendor to provide program-, classroom-, and child-centered services designed to support all staff with children at an early learning site and assess and make recommendations for particular children. In conjunction, the mental health consultants collaborate with community networks and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and provide information to inform and improve their work in training, coaching, and supporting early learning sites.

The Lead Agency developed Louisiana Early Childhood Key Training Modules to increase the quality of training available to early childhood teachers across the state and offers those modules or the materials for those modules through the Lead Agency website. In addition to these key training modules, the Lead Agency developed Key Orientation Training modules, which are accessible through the Lead Agency website, as an orientation mechanism to assist early learning centers and family child care sites to meet licensing requirements and to prepare teachers and leaders to offer a quality environment from day one.

The Lead Agency offers early childhood sessions at a Lead Agency-hosted annual professional learning conference. The conference brings Louisiana educators together with content experts in order to share knowledge, learn new skills, and prepare for the next academic year. The conference aligns with the Lead Agency goals and vision while allowing educators to attend sessions with high-quality strategies, resources, and alignment to Louisiana’s top educational priorities.

The Lead Agency also approves additional training hours for early childhood-related conferences as well, to offer a range of opportunities for providers to

obtain continuing education hours that can be used to meet the requirements within Bulletin 137. Presenters must include a resume or Pathways provider ID and description of the workshop in order to receive approval.

Additionally, the Lead Agency developed Workforce Support Modules that aim to support and improve the recruitment, hiring, retention, and evaluation of employees. The Lead Agency will offer these modules in multiple modalities over the next three years and ensure that every Child Care Resource and Referral agency offers multiple opportunities for directors to participate. The modules incorporate realistic scenarios and reflection on personal practices that come from Louisiana child care providers and module participants, national/statewide data, and, for modules that are presented by a trainer/facilitator, resources to guide discussion and collaboration amongst participants, to share best practices. The Lead Agency may offer these modules through a virtual option that can be taken asynchronously, as well as incorporate shorter lessons from the modules into recurring webinars, such as the Monthly Provider Update Webinar. The Lead Agency intends to incorporate follow-up with all participants to track the impact of these modules on teacher retention, quality of instruction, and teacher turnover over the next three years.

Further, the Lead Agency will continue to invest in scholarships for Board-approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate programs available statewide, to ensure lead teachers have the professional learning necessary to provide high-quality care and education.

- ii. Developing, maintaining, or implementing early learning and developmental guidelines.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **The Lead Agency offers early childhood sessions at a Lead Agency-hosted annual professional learning conference. The conference brings Louisiana educators together with content experts in order to share knowledge, learn new skills, and prepare for the next academic year. The conference aligns with the Lead Agency goals and vision while allowing educators to attend sessions with high-quality strategies, resources, and alignment to Louisiana's top educational priorities. Information related to Louisiana's early learning and developmental guidelines is shared through the conference.**

- iii. Developing, implementing, or enhancing a quality improvement system.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **The state's unified quality rating and improvement system is administered statewide for all publicly-funded programs, including Early Head Start and Head Start sites, school-based pre-K, and child care centers accepting public funding such as the CCAP subsidy. Results from the Louisiana QRIS are posted on Louisiana's School and Center Finder as well as on the lead agency website: <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/performance-profiles>.**

Through the state's unified quality rating and improvement system, each site receives multiple CLASS observations throughout the course of a typical academic year, with every classroom receiving an observation in the fall and in the spring. These observations are averaged to generate the ratings for sites; additional informational metrics on the use of best practices are collected and published including information about curriculum, assessment, and educational attainment and certification of teachers.

Through the state's QRIS, teachers in early learning sites receive feedback, both from local community observers as well as from independent third-party observers. This feedback provides pathways for teachers to improve and checkpoints to understand how much they have improved. The process of combining local and third-party observations of classrooms ensures that there is significant capacity in local communities to understand what quality in early childhood classrooms looks like and how to promote it in individual classrooms and sites, as well as across communities more broadly.

Annually the Lead Agency uses data-driven determinations from Performance Scores to determine sites that are high-priority for quality improvement support by CCR&Rs and/or the mental health consultation program. Sites identified as high-priority receive ongoing quality improvement support, which includes individual or small group training and coaching to improve teacher-child interactions and high-quality experiences as well as program leaders' abilities to support quality.

- iv. Improving the supply and quality of child care services for infants and toddlers.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **To assess the quality of child care services for infants and toddlers, all child care centers accepting public funding such as the CCAP subsidy are required to participate in the state's quality rating system. Results from the Louisiana QRIS are posted on Louisiana's School and Center Finder as well as on the Lead Agency website:**
<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/performance-profiles>.

Through the state's unified quality rating and improvement system, each publicly-funded site's infant and toddler classrooms receive multiple CLASS observations throughout the course of a typical academic year, with every classroom receiving an observation in the fall and in the spring. These infant and toddler teachers receive feedback, both from local community observers as well as from independent third-party observers, that provides pathways for teachers to improve and checkpoints to understand how much they have improved.

Annually the Lead Agency uses data-driven determinations about infant and toddler care and education from Performance Scores to determine sites that are high-priority for quality improvement support by CCR&Rs and/or the mental health consultation program. Sites identified as high-priority receive ongoing

quality improvement support, which includes individual or small group training and coaching to improve infant and toddler teacher-child interactions and high-quality experiences as well as program leaders' abilities to support quality in infant and toddler classrooms.

- v. Establishing or expanding a statewide system of CCR&R services.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **The Lead Agency continues to work to optimize the CCR&Rs' available capacity through monthly administrative community of practice events, Master Coach Professional Learning Community meetings and trainings, and in-field monitoring of key activities. Monthly and additional biannual reporting by the CCR&Rs provides additional opportunities for the Lead Agency to directly or indirectly promote the CCR&Rs' strategic planning that includes community-level footprint, efficiency, programmatic relationships, resource and referral management for families, and advanced coaching and training to the field.**

- vi. Facilitating compliance with Lead Agency child care licensing, monitoring, inspection and health and safety standards.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **CCDF funds will be used to monitor all licensed CCDF and non-CCDF and certified sites for compliance with the health and safety standards and to provide on-site technical assistance and provider orientation training regarding health and safety standards.**

- vii. Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care services within the State/Territory.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **To evaluate and assess the quality of child care services, the state's unified quality rating and improvement system is administered statewide for all child care centers accepting public funding such as the CCAP subsidy. Results from the Louisiana QRIS are posted on Louisiana's School and Center Finder as well as on the lead agency website: <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/performance-profiles>.**

Through the state's unified quality rating and improvement system, each site receives multiple CLASS observations throughout the course of a typical academic year, with every classroom receiving an observation in the fall and in the spring. These observations are averaged to generate the ratings for sites; additional informational metrics on the use of best practices are collected and published including information about curriculum, assessment, and educational attainment and certification of teachers. This data supports the Lead Agency in evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care services within the State.

- viii. Accreditation support.

☒ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☐ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments.

- ix. Supporting State/Territory or local efforts to develop high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **The Lead Agency plans to continue to develop high-quality child care provider program standards through monitoring for compliance and on-site technical assistance visits. This includes ensuring that there are written and implemented procedures for health and safety; that all meals and snacks provided by the center meet the requirements of the USDA CACFP; and that there are written and implemented procedures for physical activity for a minimum of 60 minutes per day, which includes providing children under age 2 with time and space for age-appropriate physical activity both indoors and outdoors and providing children age 2 and older a combination of both teacher-led and free play, both indoors and outdoors.**

- x. Other activities determined by the Lead Agency to improve the quality of child care services and the measurement of outcomes related to improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or kindergarten entry.

☐ No plans to spend in this category of activities at this time.

☒ Yes. If yes, describe current and future investments. **The Lead Agency has developed key training modules as part of quality improvement activities to build knowledge regarding best practices in early childhood health and safety, instruction, administration, and other relevant topics for early care and education, to ensure child safety, well-being, and preparedness for kindergarten entry. These modules are available through an online platform that allows for flexibility of training, accessibility of certificates, and monitoring of training quality to align with federal guidelines and the Lead Agency's regulations.**

8 Lead Agency Coordination and Partnerships to Support Service Delivery

Coordination and partnerships help ensure that the Lead Agency's efforts accomplish CCDF goals effectively, leverage other resources, and avoid duplication of effort. Such coordination and partnerships can help families better access child care, can assist in providing consumer education to parents, and can be used to improve child care quality and the stability of child care providers. Such coordination can also be particularly helpful in the aftermath of disasters when the provision of emergency child care services and the rebuilding and restoring of child care infrastructure are an essential part of ensuring the well-being of children and families in recovering communities.

This section identifies who the Lead Agency collaborates with to implement services, how match and maintenance-of-effort (MOE) funds are used, coordination with child care resource and referral (CCR&R) systems, and efforts for disaster preparedness and response plans to support continuity of operations in response to emergencies.

8.1 Coordination with Partners to Expand Accessibility and Continuity of Care

Lead Agencies must coordinate child care services supported by CCDF with other federal, State/Territory, and local level programs. This includes programs for the benefit of Indian children, infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

8.1.1 Coordination with required and optional partners

Describe how the Lead Agency coordinates and the results of this coordination of the provision of child care services with the organizations and agencies to expand accessibility and continuity of care and to assist children enrolled in early childhood programs in receiving full-day services that meet the needs of working families.

The Lead Agency must coordinate with the following agencies:

- a. State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care or similar coordinating body (pursuant to 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act). Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **All Lead Agency CCDF policies are presented to the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council for input and feedback prior to rule-making. The minutes of the Council meetings are presented to the Lead Agency's state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), which has the constitutional and statutory authority to make policy decisions that govern the public education system of the state.**
- b. Indian Tribe(s) and/or Tribal organization(s), at the option of the Tribe or Tribal organization. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination, including which Tribe(s) was (were) involved: **The Lead Agency's Office of Early Childhood Care and Education is ready and eager to participate in recurring meetings with the state's Tribal organizations to coordinate the provision of child care services and ideas for best practices to meet the needs of children and families.**

☐ Not applicable. Check here if there are no Indian Tribes and/or Tribal organizations in the State/Territory.

- c. State/Territory agency(ies) responsible for programs for children with disabilities, including early intervention programs authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The state's lead agency for IDEA Part C (the Louisiana Department of Health, or LDH) is involved in each of the CCDF Lead Agency's local community networks, through LDH's regional service coordinators, who are designated local network partners. Through this coordination, the LDH EarlySteps program provides services to families with infants and toddlers with special needs, aged birth to 36 months. The Louisiana Department of Education is the Lead Agency for Part B, Section 619 for preschool; the local education agency Section 619 coordinators are likewise mandatory local network partners. Additionally and more importantly, every classroom that includes a Part C or Part B, Section 619-funded child is part of the state's unified accountability system, thereby ensuring the same quality care and education is available for all children.**

The Lead Agency also collaborates with the state agency responsible for Part C on efforts involving an Early Childhood Developmental Screening Initiative. The goals of the Early Childhood Developmental Screening Initiative are to screen and identify children with special needs and/or disabilities early and accurately so that children receive timely, appropriate, and effective support opportunities and interventions. The Lead Agency

further partners with the state agency responsible for Part C to provide professional development opportunities regarding early identification and intervention.

- d. State/Territory office/director for Head Start State collaboration. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The state Head Start Collaboration Office is housed under the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency and state Head Start Collaboration Office (HCSO) work to ensure full-year, full-time services for qualified children and their families. A member of the Lead Agency's Child Care Assistance Program participates in the "friends" affiliate of the Louisiana Head Start Association and keeps those members and the Lead Agency aware of changes and needs in child care in Louisiana to expand accessibility and continuation of quality care. The Lead Agency and HCSO also work directly with Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership sites and ensure a smooth transition of services for children enrolled in these programs. Additionally, the Head Start Collaboration Office, under the Lead Agency, works with FINS (the Family in Need of Services program) to help families of incarcerated youth.**
- e. State/Territory agency responsible for public health, including the agency responsible for immunizations. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency coordinates with the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) on verifying immunizations (where applicable) for children in the Child Care Assistance Program; with that access to immunization records, the Lead Agency can reduce the burden of families having to provide that documentation. The Lead Agency also coordinates with LDH regarding licensing, health, and safety issues, consulting on needed policy changes and communications to the field. This successful coordination was especially important during the pandemic and for sharing information about other public health priorities.**
- f. State/Territory agency responsible for employment services/workforce development. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency collaborates with the Louisiana Workforce Commission, which is the agency responsible for employment services/workforce development. The Lead Agency uses information provided by the Workforce Commission's HiRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment) accounts to certify families Actively Seeking Employment (ASE) and conducts collaborative meetings to discuss concerns. The Louisiana Workforce Commission has representation on both the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council and Early Childhood Care and Education Commission. Also, the Lead Agency takes an active role in workforce development and support for both directors and teachers and is seeking to build increased collaboration with the Louisiana Workforce Commission in those efforts, to identify additional resources to support the development of an early childhood teacher pipeline.**
- g. State/Territory agency responsible for public education, including pre-Kindergarten. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency is the Louisiana Department of Education, which houses all public education entities including pre-K; therefore, coordination is continual regarding access and quality. The unification and coordination has resulted in consistent standards and increased quality across all early learning sites (child care, school-based pre-K, and Early Head Start/Head Start).**
- h. State/Territory agency responsible for child care licensing. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency houses the team that is responsible for child care licensing; therefore, coordination is continual regarding health and safety quality and**

access. The unification and coordination has resulted in collaborative efforts between early childhood teams to improve quality of early childhood classrooms from both a health and safety and education approach.

- i. State/Territory agency responsible for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and other relevant nutrition programs. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency houses the Division of Nutrition Assistance, which is responsible for the Child and Adult Care Food Program; therefore, coordination is continual regarding nutrition access and quality. The unification and coordination has resulted in the CCDF and CACFP teams collaborating to encourage more providers to participate in both programs and supporting rollout of each unit's new initiatives.**
- j. McKinney-Vento State coordinators for homeless education and other agencies providing services for children experiencing homelessness and, to the extent practicable, local McKinney-Vento liaisons. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency houses the State Homeless Coordinator; therefore, coordination is continual regarding access and quality. Also, local McKinney-Vento liaisons are integrated into the enrollment eligibility process by each local community network lead agency, with the goal of seamless eligibility that is not impaired because a family is homeless. This integration is required to be documented in the local community's coordinated enrollment plan. Because of the Lead Agency's work with these internal and external partners and understanding how few eligible families may self-identify as homeless, the Lead Agency is updating the Child Care Assistance Program application to include a broader range of answers to better identify homeless families for services.**
- k. State/Territory agency responsible for the TANF program. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency coordinates with the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which is the agency responsible for TANF, regarding access and quality for families receiving and eligible for TANF. This coordination allows a seamless process for families receiving these services and ensures a smooth transition as the families move from the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program (FITAP, a TANF program under DCFS) to greater independence and regular CCAP certification for low income. In addition, families who apply for child care assistance who are Actively Seeking Employment but cannot currently be served due to the waitlist are referred to the STEP program, operated by the TANF program.**
- l. State/Territory agency responsible for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency collaborates with the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), which is the agency responsible for Medicaid and the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance (LaCHIP). The Lead Agency also provides information about these programs on the Lead Agency website.**
- m. State/Territory agency responsible for mental health services. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency collaborates with the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), which is the agency responsible for most mental health services in the state. The Lead Agency also keeps LDH staff informed about the Mental Health Consultation program the Lead Agency funds in child care settings. As a result of the coordination the Lead Agency developed a resource, which the Lead Agency sends to those who request information about behavioral support resources, whether families whose children are being suspended or expelled from sites or providers who are working**

with families to address children's behavioral issues.

- n. Child care resource and referral agencies, child care consumer education organizations, and providers of early childhood education training and professional development. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency manages the Child Care Resource and Referral contracts, the online early learning site finder website, and the oversight of the community network lead agencies, all of which provide consumer education. The CCR&Rs also provide professional development as part of the Lead Agency's contract with the CCR&Rs. CCR&Rs submit to the Lead Agency monthly reports of services provided, and the Lead Agency provides feedback, technical assistance, and collaboration opportunities. Consequently, coordination is continual regarding access to quality consumer education and early childhood education training and professional development.**
- o. Statewide afterschool network or other coordinating entity for out-of-school time care (if applicable). Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency meets at least annually with a coordinating entity for out-of-school time care to discuss and develop potential strategies to increase the quality of after-school programs.**
- p. Agency responsible for emergency management and response. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: **The Lead Agency coordinates emergency management planning and response with the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (GOHSEP) and other agencies such as DCFS and LDH, in an effort to maintain family access to child care and assist providers in maintaining their businesses. This coordination has resulted in the successful provision of respite child care services following natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes and additional child care services for emergency responders/essential workers during the pandemic.**
- q. The following are examples of optional partners a Lead Agency might coordinate with to provide services. Check which optional partners the Lead Agency coordinates with and describe the coordination and results of the coordination.
 - i. ☒ State/Territory/local agencies with Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grants. Describe: **All Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership sites are required program partners in their local early childhood community network. As such, they participate in the local community-wide coordinated enrollment system and the state's unified accountability system, which are designed to ensure access to quality. Additionally, the state has singled out Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships to receive specially-designed support in the form of expedited Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) assistance.**
 - ii. ☒ State/Territory institutions for higher education, including community colleges. Describe: **The Lead Agency collaborates with the Louisiana Board of Regents, which is the coordinating board for higher education, to develop strategies focused on addressing the needs of the early childhood workforce through teacher preparation via post-secondary education. This includes ongoing discussions about creation or expansion of stackable credentials.**
 - iii. ☐ Other federal, State, local, and/or private agencies providing early childhood and school-age/youth-serving developmental services. Describe:
 - iv. ☒ State/Territory agency responsible for implementing the Maternal, Infant, and

Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs grant. Describe: **The Lead Agency collaborates with the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), which is the agency responsible for the Maternal and Child Home Visitation program grant. The Lead Agency works to ensure LDH can inform parents in home visiting programs about access and other Department resources.**

- v. **[x] Agency responsible for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Program. Describe: The Lead Agency collaborates with the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), which is the agency responsible for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment. The Lead Agency works with LDH on efforts that involve the improvement of developmental screening processes, including but not limited to data collection, outreach, and developmental screening feedback from the local community networks.**
- vi. **[x] State/Territory agency responsible for child welfare. Describe: The Lead Agency collaborates with the Louisiana Department Children and Family Services (DCFS), which is the agency responsible for child welfare. The Lead Agency works with DCFS to ensure access for foster care children. As a result of this coordination as well as other factors, the Lead Agency is working to expand Family Child Care providers participating in the subsidy system in areas where foster families do not currently have sufficient child care options.**
- vii. **[x] Child care provider groups or associations. Describe: The Lead Agency collaborates with provider groups such as the Child Care Association of Louisiana (CCAL), For Providers By Providers (4PxP), and the Louisiana Head Start Association (LHSA) on access and quality. These collaborations allow the Lead Agency to conduct more effective and wide-reaching outreach to providers; these collaborators also help the Lead Agency test new systems and processes for more effective implementation.**
- viii. **[x] Parent groups or organizations. Describe: The Lead Agency collaborates with parent/family/child advocates such as the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children on access and quality.**
- ix. **[] Title IV B 21st Century Community Learning Center Coordinators. Describe:**
- x. **[x] Other. Describe: The Lead Agency also coordinates with the Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal and the Louisiana Department of Health's Sanitarian Services regarding licensing, health, and safety issues, consulting on needed policy changes and communications to the field. This successful coordination was especially important during the pandemic and for sharing information about other priorities.**

8.2 Optional Use of Combined Funds, CCDF Matching, and Maintenance-of-Effort Funds

Lead Agencies may combine CCDF funds with other Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood development programs, including those in 8.1.1. These programs include preschool programs, Tribal child care programs, and other early childhood programs, including those serving infants and toddlers with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

Combining funds may include blending multiple funding streams, pooling funds, or layering funds from multiple funding streams to expand and/or enhance services for infants, toddlers,

preschoolers, and school-age children and families to allow for the delivery of comprehensive quality care that meets the needs of children and families. For example, Lead Agencies may use multiple funding sources to offer grants or contracts to programs to deliver services; a Lead Agency may allow a county/local government to use coordinated funding streams; or policies may be in place that allow local programs to layer CCDF funds with additional funding sources to pay for full-day, full-year child care that meets Early Head Start/Head Start Program Performance Standards or State/Territory pre-Kindergarten requirements in addition to State/Territory child care licensing requirements.

As a reminder, CCDF funds may be used in collaborative efforts with Head Start and Early Head Start programs to provide comprehensive child care and development services for children who are eligible for both programs.

8.2.1 Combining funding for CCDF services

Does the Lead Agency combine funding for CCDF services with Title XX of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), Title IV B 21st Century Community Learning Center Funds, State-only child care funds, TANF direct funds for child care not transferred into CCDF, Title IV-B, IV-E funds, or other federal or State programs?

☒ No. (If no, skip to question 8.2.2)

☐ Yes.

- i. If yes, describe which funds you will combine. Combined funds may include, but are not limited to:
 - ☐ Title XX (Social Services Block Grant, SSBG)
 - ☐ Title IV B 21st Century Community Learning Center Funds (Every Student Succeeds Act)
 - ☐ State- or Territory-only child care funds
 - ☐ TANF direct funds for child care not transferred into CCDF
 - ☐ Title IV-B funds (Social Security Act)
 - ☐ Title IV-E funds (Social Security Act)
 - ☐ Other. Describe:
- ii. If yes, what does the Lead Agency use combined funds to support, such as extending the day or year of services available (i.e., full-day, full-year programming for working families), smoothing transitions for children, enhancing and aligning quality of services, linking comprehensive services to children in child care, or developing the supply of child care for vulnerable populations?

8.2.2 Funds used to meet CCDF matching and MOE requirements

Lead Agencies may use public funds and donated funds to meet CCDF match and maintenance of effort (matching MOE) requirements.

Note: Lead Agencies that use State pre-Kindergarten funds to meet matching requirements must check State pre-Kindergarten funds and public and/or private funds.

Use of private funds for match or maintenance-of-effort: Donated funds do not need to be under the administrative control of the Lead Agency to qualify as an expenditure for federal match. However, Lead Agencies must identify and designate in the State/Territory CCDF Plan the donated funds given to public or private entities to implement the CCDF child care program.

☐ Not applicable. The Lead Agency is a Territory (skip to 8.3.1).

a. Does the Lead Agency use public funds to meet match requirements?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe which funds are used: **The Lead Agency uses various sources to meet the match requirements. Those sources include the Louisiana School Readiness Tax Credits, self-generated funds from background checks, and State General Funds from the pre-kindergarten funding.**

☐ No.

b. Does the Lead Agency use donated funds to meet match requirements?

☐ Yes. If yes, identify the entity(ies) designated to receive donated funds:

i. ☐ Donated directly to the state.

ii. ☐ Donated to a separate entity(ies) designated to receive donated funds. If checked, identify the name, address, contact, and type of entities designated to receive private donated funds:

☒ No.

c. Does the Lead Agency certify that, if State expenditures for pre-Kindergarten programs are used to meet the MOE requirements, the following is true:

- The Lead Agency did not reduce its level of effort in full-day/full-year child care services.
- The Lead Agency ensures that pre-Kindergarten programs meet the needs of working parents.
- The estimated percentage of the MOE requirement that will be met with pre-Kindergarten expenditures (does not to exceed 20 percent).
- If the percentage is more than 10 percent of the MOE requirement, the State will coordinate its pre-Kindergarten and child care services to expand the availability of child care.

Public pre-Kindergarten funds may also serve as MOE funds as long as the State can describe how it will coordinate pre-Kindergarten and child care services to expand the availability of child care while using public pre-Kindergarten funds as no more than 20 percent of the State's MOE or 30 percent of its matching funds in a single fiscal year.

If expenditures for pre-Kindergarten services are used to meet the MOE requirement, does the Lead Agency certify that the State or Territory has not reduced its level of effort in full-day/full-year child care services?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

8.3 Coordination with Child Care Resource and Referral Systems

Lead Agencies may use CCDF funds to establish or support a system or network of local or regional child care resource and referral (CCR&R) organizations that is coordinated, to the extent determined by the Lead Agency, by a statewide public or private non-profit, community-based or regionally based, lead child care resource and referral organization (such as a statewide CCR&R network).

If Lead Agencies use CCDF funds for local CCR&R organizations, the local or regional CCR&R organizations supported by those funds must, at the direction of the Lead Agency:

- Provide parents in the State with consumer education information concerning the full range of child care options (including faith-based and community-based child care providers), analyzed by provider, including child care provided during non-traditional hours and through emergency child care centers, in their area.
- To the extent practicable, work directly with families who receive assistance to offer the families support and assistance to make an informed decision about which child care providers they will use to ensure that the families are enrolling their children in the most appropriate child care setting that suits their needs and one that is of high quality (as determined by the Lead Agency).
- Collect data and provide information on the coordination of services and supports, including services under Part B, Section 619 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Collect data and provide information on the supply of and demand for child care services in areas of the State and submit the information to the Lead Agency.
- Work to establish partnerships with public agencies and private entities, including faith-based and community-based child care providers, to increase the supply and quality of child care services in the State and, as appropriate, coordinate their activities with the activities of the Lead Agency and local agencies that administer funds made available through CCDF.

8.3.1 Funding a system or network of CCR&R organization(s)

Does the Lead Agency fund a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s)?

☐ No. The Lead Agency does not fund a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s) and has no plans to establish one.

☐ No, but the Lead Agency has plans to develop a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s).

☒ Yes. The Lead Agency funds a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s) with all the responsibilities outlined above. If yes, describe the activities outlined above carried out by the CCR&R organization(s), as directed by the Lead Agency:

The Department funds a system of contracted Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies. As of July 2024, there are eight Child Care Resource and Referral agencies in Louisiana. Each CCR&R has its own specified service area, with some agencies serving multiple parishes or regions and others serving a single parish. The Department coordinates CCR&R efforts through the development of annual strategic plans, goals, and objectives for the work of all CCR&R agencies. This coordination is led by a CCR&R Manager who also develops and implements supports for all CCR&R agencies, including but not limited to CCR&R Communities of Practice, CCR&R Master Coach training, and individualized support calls focused on CCR&R performance in relation to services

provided.

Each CCR&R is required to operate as an Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC). ELRCs are responsible for building connections among and between support systems and child care providers within the communities served by CCR&Rs. In serving as an ELRC, CCR&R agencies are required to collaborate and bring together professionals to strategize and identify needs, maximize resources, and leverage local and statewide strengths to address needs and improve services and supports for early childhood providers and families. This includes connecting providers with available resources and information and supporting sites to participate in the Lead Agency's child care programs. It also includes hosting collaborative opportunities for child care leaders (site directors) across the CCR&R service areas to participate in discussions and training with content tailored to the community they serve and offers opportunities to strengthen peer-to-peer relationships.

Early Learning Resource Centers also serve as a hub of child care information where all families can receive information about quality child care within the community and personalized child care referrals to child care providers based on specific needs or preferences. ELRCs can provide resources and programs for parenting and family support that includes child safety information, at-home learning activities and ideas, ACES training, and developmental milestone information. ELRCs also provide families with information from other community organizations that provide resources and services for families with young children.

Finally, as ELRCs, CCR&R agencies coordinate resources and information so that it is more accessible to the community. This may involve participating in meetings hosted by partners or convening partners to plan for community services. It may also include distributing donations after a disaster. The ELRC is recognized by each agency as a base of operations during an emergency, such as a disaster or epidemic. In such emergencies the ELRCs will provide emergency respite care services and information on other community services during an emergency and make that information available to the general public and all families who may be eligible for subsidized child care.

8.4 Public-Private Partnerships

Lead Agencies must demonstrate how they encourage partnerships among other public agencies, Tribal organizations, private entities, faith-based organizations, businesses, or organizations that promote business involvement, and/or community-based organizations to leverage existing service delivery (i.e., cooperative agreement among providers to pool resources to pay for shared fixed costs and operation) to leverage existing child care and early education service delivery systems and to increase the supply and quality of child care services for children younger than age 13.

8.4.1 Lead Agency public-private partnerships

Identify and describe any public-private partnerships encouraged by the Lead Agency to leverage public and private resources to further the goals of CCDF: **The Lead Agency utilizes Ready Start Networks in communities to establish public-private partnerships that increase the quality and supply of early childhood care and education in those communities. Ready Start Networks are local-level agencies that are tasked with creating strategic plans for improving early childhood**

quality and access at the community level; developing a coalition of early childhood stakeholders; creating an advisory council to guide local-level decision-making related to quality, access, and local funding for early care and education; and creating, maintaining, and updating a funding plan that outlines the Ready Start Network's plans for seeking additional funding to support early care and education initiatives implemented at the local level. To execute these aims, Ready Start Networks form partnerships with private entities that are interested in supporting early care and education at the local level.

8.5 Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan

Lead Agencies must establish a Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan and demonstrate how they will address the needs of children—including the need for safe child care before, during, and after a state of emergency declared by the Governor or a major disaster or emergency (as defined by Section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5122)—through a Statewide Disaster Plan.

8.5.1 Statewide Disaster Plan updates

- a. When was the Lead Agency's Child Care Disaster Plan most recently updated and for what reason? **Spring 2024, as part of periodic review and updating of information (published June 2024)**
- b. Please certify compliance by checking the required elements the Lead Agency includes in the current State Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan.
 - i. The plan was developed in collaboration with the following required entities:
 - ☒ State human services agency.
 - ☒ State emergency management agency.
 - ☒ State licensing agency.
 - ☒ State health department or public health department.
 - ☒ Local and State child care resource and referral agencies.
 - ☒ State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care or similar coordinating body.
 - ii. ☒ The plan includes guidelines for the continuation of child care subsidies.
 - iii. ☒ The plan includes guidelines for the continuation of child care services.
 - iv. ☒ The plan includes procedures for the coordination of post-disaster recovery of child care services.
 - v. The plan contains requirements for all CCDF providers (both licensed and license-exempt) to have in place:
 - ☒ Procedures for evacuation.
 - ☒ Procedures for relocation.
 - ☒ Procedures for shelter-in-place.
 - ☒ Procedures for communication and reunification with families.

- ☒ Procedures for continuity of operations.
- ☒ Procedures for accommodations of infants and toddlers.
- ☒ Procedures for accommodations of children with disabilities.
- ☒ Procedures for accommodations of children with chronic medical conditions.
- vi. ☒ The plan contains procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training.
- vii. ☒ The plan contains procedures for staff and volunteer practice drills.
- viii. If any of the above are not checked, describe:
- ix. If available, provide the direct URL/website link to the website where the Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan is posted:
<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/child-care-providers/early-learning-center-emergency-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

9 Family Outreach and Consumer Education

CCDF consumer education requirements facilitate parental choice in child care arrangements, support parents as child care consumers who need information to make informed choices regarding the services that best suit their family's needs, and the delivery of resources that can support child development and well-being. Lead Agency consumer education activities must provide information for parents receiving CCDF assistance, the general public, and, when appropriate, child care providers. Lead Agencies should use targeted strategies for each group to ensure tailored consumer education information and take steps to ensure they are effectively reaching all individuals, including those with limited English proficiency and those with disabilities.

In this section, Lead Agencies address their consumer education practices, including details about their child care consumer education website, and the process for collecting and maintaining a record of parental complaints.

9.1 Parental Complaint Process

Lead Agencies must maintain a record of substantiated parental complaints against child care providers and make information regarding such complaints available to the public on request. Lead Agencies must also provide a detailed description of the hotline or similar reporting process for parents to submit complaints about child care providers; the process for substantiating complaints; the manner in which the Lead Agency maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints; and ways that the Lead Agency makes information on such parental complaints available to the public on request. Lead Agencies are not required to limit the complaint process to parents.

9.1.1 Parental complaint process

- a. Describe the Lead Agency's hotline or similar reporting process through which parents can submit complaints about child care providers, including a link if it is a Web-based process:
For complaints about licensed child care providers, parents or the public can submit a complaint via email at ldelicening@la.gov, via fax at 225-342-2498, via phone at 225-342-

9905 or 1-855-4LA-KIDS (1-855-452-5437) toll free. For complaints about license-exempt providers, parents or the public can also submit a complaint via email at providercertification@la.gov, via fax at 225-342-4180, or via phone at 225-342-0694. Complaints about child care providers suspected of committing fraud can be submitted via email at LDECCAPfraud@la.gov or via the fraud hotline at 225-342-6230. The Lead Agency may also receive referrals from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

- b. Describe how the parental complaint process ensures broad access to services for families that speak languages other than English: **The parental complaint process ensures broad access to services for families that speak languages other than English by offering translation services. A parent can choose to submit a complaint via our website, which offers translation service, or information submitted via email can be submitted for translation.**
- c. Describe how the parental complaint process ensures broad access to services for persons with disabilities: **The parental complaint process ensures broad access for persons with disabilities by allowing different ways for complaints for sites to be submitted, which includes via email, via fax, or via phone.**
- d. For complaints about providers, including CCDF providers and non-CCDF providers, does the Lead Agency have a process and timeline for screening, substantiating, and responding to complaints, including information about whether the process includes monitoring?

☒ Yes. If yes, describe: **The Licensing team reviews all complaints forwarded to or received by their team. The complainant is informed of the following information: that the complaint has been received, whether or not the complaint meets the criteria for a licensing investigation, that contact may be made for additional information, that the investigation can take up to 30 calendar days, and that results of the investigation may be found on School and Center Finder using <https://louisianaschools.com/>. If the complaint warrants a notification to another state agency, a referral will be made. Any emails or calls received that are not a violation of licensure or policy are documented internally and closed out. If the complaint notes something that is considered a violation and enough information is obtained from the complaint or from following up with the complainant if the complaint contains contact information, a monitoring visit is conducted. Upon completion of the monitoring visit, if the complaint allegations are substantiated, necessary action on the provider is taken based on results of the Licensing Specialist's monitoring visit and subject to Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Bulletins 137 and 139 and the Child Care Assistance Program Provider Agreement. If there is no cause for further concern, the case will be closed and logged, with investigation information noted on the Lead Agency website on that site's page (louisianaschools.com). If a monitoring visit is determined as warranted, a complaint investigation of the provider regarding the allegations must be completed within 23 business days. If any deficiencies are cited related to the allegations, the complaint is considered substantiated.**

☐ No.

- e. For substantiated parental complaints, who maintains the record for CCDF and non-CCDF providers? **All complaints investigated, of both CCDF and non-CCDF providers, are tracked in the Lead Agency's Licensing system, indicating whether or not the complaint was substantiated. The system allows the tracking of complaints and creation of reports**

enabling visibility of on-going or repeat violations.

- f. Describe how information about substantiated parental complaints is made available to the public; this information can include the consumer education website discussed in subsection 9.2: **When a monitoring visit is complete and reviewed by a Licensing Supervisor or Consultant, the statement of deficiencies is made web-viewable under that site's history of inspections through School and Site Finder (louisianaschools.com), and it is noted on the published inspection information that the findings are in regard to a complaint visit.**

9.2 Consumer Education Website

Lead Agencies must provide information to parents, the general public, and child care providers through a State or Territory website, which is consumer-friendly and easily accessible for families who speak languages other than English and persons with disabilities. The website must:

- Include information to assist families in understanding the Lead Agency's policies and procedures, including licensing child care providers;
- Include monitoring and inspection reports for each provider and, if available, the quality of each provider;
- Provide the aggregate number of deaths, serious injuries, and the number of cases of substantiated child abuse that have occurred in child care settings;
- Include contact information for local CCR&R organizations to help families access additional information on finding child care; and
- Include information on how parents can contact the Lead Agency and other organizations to better understand the information on the website.

9.2.1 Consumer-friendly website

Does the Lead Agency ensure that its consumer education website is consumer-friendly and easily accessible?

- i. Provide the URL for the Lead Agency's consumer education website homepage:
<https://louisianaschools.com/>
- ii. Does the Lead Agency certify that the consumer education website ensures broad access to services for families who speak languages other than English?
[x] Yes.
[] No. If no, describe:
- iii. Does the Lead Agency certify that the consumer education website ensures broad access to services for persons with disabilities?
[x] Yes.
[] No. If no, describe:

9.2.2 Additional consumer education website links

Provide the direct URL/website link for the following:

- i. Provide the direct URL/website link to how the Lead Agency licenses child care providers: <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/child-care-and-development-fund-licensing>
- ii. Provide the direct URL/website link to the processes for conducting monitoring and inspections of child care providers: **BESE Bulletin 137 - Louisiana Early Learning Center Licensing Regulations, sections 703 and 713 and BESE Bulletin 139 sections 309 and 313**
<https://bese.louisiana.gov/policy>
- iii. Provide the direct URL/website link to the policies and procedures related to criminal background checks for staff members of child care providers: https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/cccbc-system-user-manual.pdf?sfvrsn=e37b921f_4
- iv. Provide the direct URL/website link to the offenses that prevent individuals from being employed by a child care provider: https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/prohibited-offenses.pdf?sfvrsn=ce9f9e1f_2

9.2.3 Searchable list of providers

- a. The consumer education website must include a list of all licensed providers searchable by ZIP code.
 - i. Does the Lead Agency certify that the consumer education website includes a list of all licensed providers searchable by ZIP code?
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
 - ii. Provide the direct URL/website link to the list of child care providers searchable by ZIP code: <https://louisianaschools.com/>
 - iii. In addition to the licensed child care providers that must be included in the searchable list, are there additional providers included in the Lead Agency's searchable list of child care providers? Check all that apply:
 - ☒ License-exempt center-based CCDF providers.
 - ☒ License-exempt family child care CCDF providers.
 - ☐ License-exempt non-CCDF providers.
 - ☒ Relative CCDF child care providers.
 - ☒ Other (e.g., summer camps, public pre-Kindergarten). Describe:
Additional providers that are included in the Lead Agency's searchable list of child care providers include licensed non-CCDF providers (Type I, Type II).
- b. Identify what additional (optional) information, if any, is available in the searchable results by ZIP code. Check the box when information is provided.

Provider Information Available in Searchable Results
--

	All licensed providers	License-exempt CCDF center-based providers	License-exempt CCDF family child care home providers	License-exempt non-CCDF providers	Relative CCDF providers
Contact information	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[x]
Enrollment capacity	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[x]
Hours, days, and months of operation	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[x]
Provider education and training	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[]
Languages spoken by the caregiver	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Quality information	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[]
Monitoring reports	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[x]
Willingness to accept CCDF certificates	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[x]
Ages of children served	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[]
Specialization or training for certain populations	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Care provided during nontraditional hours	[x]	[x]	[x]	[]	[x]

- c. Identify any other information searchable on the consumer education website for the child care provider type listed below and then, if checked, describe the searchable information included on the website.
- i. [x] All licensed providers. Describe: **When searching for site name, address, or zip code, the site information shared also includes district/parish, any academic offerings, whether music/art are offered, and whether transportation is offered.**
 - ii. [x] License-exempt CCDF center-based providers. Describe: **When searching for site name, address, or zip code, the site information shared also includes district/parish, any academic offerings, whether music/art are offered, and whether transportation is offered.**
 - iii. [x] License-exempt CCDF family child care providers. Describe: **When searching for site name, address, or zip code, the site information shared also includes district/parish, any academic offerings, whether music/art are offered, and whether transportation is offered.**
 - iv. [] License-exempt, non-CCDF providers. Describe:

- v. ☒ Relative CCDF providers. Describe: **When searching for site name, address, or zip code, the site information shared also includes district/parish, any academic offerings, whether music/art are offered, and whether transportation is offered.**
- vi. ☐ Other. Describe:

9.2.4 Provider-specific quality information

Lead Agencies must identify specific quality information on each child care provider for whom they have this information. Provider-specific quality information must only be posted on the consumer education website if it is available for the individual child care provider.

- a. What specific quality information does the Lead Agency provide on the website?
 - i. ☒ Quality improvement system.
 - ii. ☐ National accreditation.
 - iii. ☐ Enhanced licensing system.
 - iv. ☐ Meeting Head Start/Early Head Start Program Performance Standards.
 - v. ☐ Meeting pre-Kindergarten quality requirements.
 - vi. ☐ School-age standards.
 - vii. ☐ Quality framework or quality improvement system.
 - viii. ☐ Other. Describe:
- b. For what types of child care providers is quality information available?
 - i. ☒ Licensed CCDF providers. Describe the quality information: **All publicly-funded sites, including Head Start and Early Head Start centers, school-based public pre-K, nonpublic pre-K (NSECD), and CCDF-funded child care centers (Type III early learning centers) that were open on October 1 and February 1 receive a Performance Profile for that academic year. Performance Profiles measure the quality of publicly-funded early childhood sites serving publicly-funded children ages birth-five for each academic year, using the CLASS® tool. All infant, toddler, and Pre-K classrooms located at programs that accept public funding, including Type III licensed early learning centers with no publicly-funded children currently enrolled, are observed using the CLASS® tool once per semester by local observers (coordinated by the local community network lead agencies). A sample of these local CLASS® observations are checked by third-party CLASS® observers, via a state contract with a vendor. These profiles are required by Act 3 (2012 - La R.S. 17:407.21 through 17:407.25) and include a rating (based on CLASS® scores on a scale of 1.00-7.00 [Excellent] = 6.00-7.00, [High Proficient] = 5.25-5.99, [Proficient] = 4.50-5.24, [Approaching Proficient] = 3.00-4.49, or [Unsatisfactory] = 1.00-2.99).**

All Performance Profiles also include informational metrics for each program, which contain information regarding ratio (number of children per teacher; the smaller the ratio, the more individual attention children can receive), curriculum quality (how the site's curriculum compares with the state indicators of quality), and use of high-quality assessments (how many children are assessed from fall to

spring). These metrics include a rating of one, two, or three stars, with three stars being of highest quality. Also reported are the percentage of teachers with degrees (no degree, CDA, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's+) and state certification.

- ii. ☐ Licensed non-CCDF providers. Describe the quality information:
- iii. ☐ License-exempt center-based CCDF providers. Describe the quality information:
- iv. ☒ License-exempt FCC CCDF providers. Describe the quality information: FCC CCDF providers have the option to participate in the state's QRIS. The following quality information is shared for those sites that opt in: All publicly-funded sites, including Head Starts and Early Head Starts, public pre-K, nonpublic pre-K (NSECD), and CCDF-funded child care centers (Type III early learning centers) that were open on October 1 and February 1 receive a Performance Profile for that academic year. Performance Profiles measure the quality of publicly-funded early childhood sites serving publicly-funded children ages birth-five for each academic year, using the CLASS® tool. All infant, toddler, and Pre-K classrooms located at programs that accept public funding, including Type III licensed early learning centers with no publicly-funded children currently enrolled, are observed using the CLASS® tool once per semester by local observers (coordinated by the local community network lead agencies). A sample of these local CLASS® observations are checked by third-party CLASS® observers, via a state contract with a vendor. These profiles are required by Act 3 (2012 - La R.S. 17:407.21 through 17:407.25) and include a rating (based on CLASS® scores on a scale of 1.00-7.00 [☐Excellent☐ = 6.00-7.00, ☐High Proficient☐ = 5.25-5.99, ☐Proficient☐ = 4.50-5.24, ☐Approaching Proficient☐ = 3.00-4.49, or ☐Unsatisfactory☐ = 1.00-2.99).

All Performance Profiles also include informational metrics for each program, which contain information regarding ratio (number of children per teacher; the smaller the ratio, the more individual attention children can receive), curriculum quality (how the site's curriculum compares with the state indicators of quality), and use of high-quality assessments (how many children are assessed from fall to spring). These metrics include a rating of one, two, or three stars, with three stars being of highest quality. Also reported are the percentage of teachers with degrees (no degree, CDA, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's+) and state certification.

- v. ☐ License-exempt non-CCDF providers. Describe the quality information:
- vi. ☐ Relative child care providers. Describe the quality information:
- vii. ☐ Other. Describe:

9.2.5 Aggregate data on serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated abuse

Lead Agencies must post aggregate data on serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated cases of child abuse that have occurred in child care settings each year on the consumer education website. This aggregate data must include information about any child in the care of a provider eligible to receive CCDF, not just children receiving subsidies.

This aggregate information on serious injuries and deaths must be separated by category of care (e.g., centers, family child care homes, and in-home care) and licensing status (i.e., licensed or license-exempt) for all eligible CCDF child care providers in the State/Territory. The information on instances of substantiated child abuse does not have to be organized by category of care or licensing status. Information must also include the total number of children in care by provider type and licensing status, so that families can better understand the data presented on serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated cases of abuse.

- a. Certify by checking below that the required elements are included in the Aggregate Data Report on serious incident data that have occurred in child care settings each year.
 - i. ☒ The total number of serious injuries of children in care by provider category and licensing status.
 - ii. ☒ The total number of deaths of children in care by provider category and licensing status.
 - iii. ☒ The total number of substantiated instances of child abuse in child care settings.
 - iv. ☒ The total number of children in care by provider category and licensing status.
 - v. If any of the above elements are not included, describe:
- b. Certify by providing:
 - i. The designated entity to which child care providers must submit reports of any serious injuries or deaths of children occurring in child care and describe how the Lead Agency obtains the aggregate data from the entity: **The Lead Agency's Licensing team is the designated entity for receipt of reports of serious injuries or deaths of children in licensed child care centers and license-exempt providers, which includes CCDF-certified family child care providers, CCDF-certified in-home providers, and CCDF-certified school-based providers. The Licensing team ensures the aggregate data is visible on the Lead Agency website.**
 - ii. The definition of "substantiated child abuse" used by the Lead Agency for this requirement: **Any complaints or incidents of child abuse proven to be true after further investigation by the Department of Children and Family Services**
 - iii. The definition of "serious injury" used by the Lead Agency for this requirement: **☐Serious Injury☐ as defined by the Lead Agency is an injury that occurs due to a substantiated health and safety violation while a child is in the care of an early learning center, family child care provider, or in-home provider and that requires medical attention. Examples include but are not limited to broken bones, cuts requiring stitches, injury of internal organs, burns, and head trauma.**
- c. Provide the direct URL/website link to the page where the aggregate number of serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated child abuse, and the total number of children in care by provider category and licensing status are posted:
https://louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/statistics-for-child-care-providers8e18fd5b8c9b66d6b292ff0000215f92.pdf?sfvrsn=eb60951f_51

9.2.6 Contact information on referrals to local child care resource and referral organizations

The Lead Agency consumer education website must include contact information on referrals to local CCR&R organizations.

- a. Does the consumer education website include contact information on referrals to local CCR&R organizations?

☒ Yes.

☐ No.

☐ Not applicable. The Lead Agency does not have local CCR&R organizations.

- b. Provide the direct URL/website link to this information:

<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/early-childhood-map---child-care-resource.pdf>

9.2.7 Lead Agency contact information for parents

The Lead Agency consumer and provider education website must include information on how parents can contact the Lead Agency or its designee and other programs that can help the parent understand information included on the website.

- a. Does the website provide directions on how parents can contact the Lead Agency or its designee and other programs to help them understand information included on the website?

☒ Yes.

☐ No.

- b. Provide the direct URL/website link to this information:

<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/contact-us>

9.2.8 Posting sliding fee scale, co-payment amount, and policies for waiving co-payments

The consumer education website must include the sliding fee scale for parent co-payments, including the co-payment amount a family may expect to pay and policies for waiving co-payments.

- a. Does the Lead Agency certify that their consumer education website includes the sliding fee scale for parent co-payments, including the co-payment amount a family may expect to pay and policies for waiving co-payments?

☒ Yes.

☐ No.

- b. Provide the direct URL/website link to the sliding fee scale.

<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/ccap-sliding-fee-scale.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

9.3 Increasing Engagement and Access to Information

Lead Agencies must collect and disseminate information about the full range of child care services to promote parental choice to parents of children eligible for CCDF, the general public, and child care providers.

9.3.1 Information about CCDF availability and eligibility

Describe how the Lead Agency shares information with eligible parents, the general public, and child care providers about the availability of child care services provided through CCDF and other programs for which the family may be eligible. The description should include, at a minimum, what is provided (e.g., written materials, the website, and direct communications) and what approaches are used to tailor information to parents, the general public, and child care providers. **Eligible parents, the general public, and child care providers are able to access information on the Lead Agency website about a variety of providers whose services are available to families, including private child care centers, Type III early learning centers, not-for-profit centers, faith-based providers, school-based child care centers, family child care providers, in-home providers, and military child care centers (though there are no military child care centers in Louisiana currently). Information about eligibility criteria for the Child Care Assistance Program is also shared.**

Provider site information, including information about each provider site's capacity, enrollment, academic offerings, a link to the website for the Community Network Lead Agency which contains information on how to enroll, information about how to contact individual sites, and academic performance, is available on the Louisiana School and Center Finder site (louisianaschools.com).

9.3.2 Information about child care and other services available for parents

Does the Lead Agency certify that it provides information described in 9.3.1 for the following required programs?

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) program.
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Programs carried out under IDEA Part B, Section 619 and Part C.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

9.3.3 Consumer statement for parents receiving CCDF services

Lead Agencies must provide parents receiving CCDF services with a consumer statement in hard copy or electronically that contains general information about the CCDF program and specific information about the child care provider they select.

Please certify if the Lead Agency provides parents receiving CCDF services a consumer statement that contains the following 8 requirements:

1. Health and safety requirements met by the provider

2. Licensing or regulatory requirements met by the provider
3. Date the provider was last inspected
4. Any history of violations of these requirements
5. Any voluntary quality standards met by the provider
6. How CCDF subsidies are designed to promote equal access
7. How to submit a complaint through the hotline
8. How to contact a local resource and referral agency or other community-based organization to receive assistance in finding and enrolling in quality child care

Does the Lead Agency provide to families, either in hard copy or electronically, a consumer statement that contains the required information about the provider they have selected, including the eight required elements above?

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

9.3.4 Informing families about best practices on child development

Describe how the Lead Agency makes information available to parents, providers, and the general public on research and best practices concerning children's development, including physical health and development, and information about successful parent and family engagement. At a minimum, the description should include what information is provided; how the information is provided; any distinct activities for sharing this information with parents, providers, the general public; and any partners in providing this information. **The Lead Agency has published its early learning and development standards online and provides information regarding the early learning and development standards with the Community Network through professional development offered through annual conferences and webinars. The Lead Agency has developed guidance documents that provide concrete examples for learning and development that coincide with developmental milestones for anyone who utilizes the early learning and development standards.**

In addition, the Lead Agency has established a definition for Kindergarten readiness that is available online. The Lead Agency also provides links to several resources that are provided by the federal Administration for Children and Families within the "Families Library," including a link to "Child Development Resources for Families," which provides information to families on developmental milestones, health and safety, developmental screening, and early learning.

9.3.5 Unlimited parental access to their children

Does the Lead Agency have procedures to ensure that parents have unlimited access to their children whenever their children are in the care of a provider who receives CCDF funds:

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

9.3.6 Informing families about best practices in social and emotional health

Describe how the Lead Agency shares information with families, providers, and the general public regarding the social-emotional and behavioral and mental health of young children, including positive behavioral intervention and support models based on research and best practices for those from birth to school age: **The Lead Agency has contracted for Mental Health Consultation services to support the behavioral and mental health of Louisiana’s youngest children and their early childhood teachers by embracing a full spectrum of supports. These supports include providing mental health resources and information for providers and families, training for child care providers focused on the prevention of challenging behaviors, and supports for families focused on finding treatment for specific mental health needs. The contracted program has three primary goals: 1) to support the mental health development of young children, 2) to support caregivers’ ability to promote multiple levels of children’s development, and 3) to refer children for treatment and/or to design behavior support plans for children in need of specific supports.**

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants understand and consider the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on children and adults in our communities. They use trauma-informed mental health consultation to lessen the effects of ACEs on the children, families, and caregivers they serve through formal (e.g., professional development for early childhood educators, parent seminars) and informal (e.g., meeting with a teacher to discuss a child in their class, supporting a parent to find community resources) methods.

Furthermore, the CCR&R agencies provide professional development opportunities to early learning sites using a set of accessible, high-quality trainings designed by experts on ACEs. Evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies are also discussed in the training. In addition to the training, early learning sites are given resources, videos, and hard copies of handouts. In training the sites, the CCR&Rs also provided suggested strategies on how early learning sites could redeliver ACEs education to families. Some strategies include holding open houses with this topic focus, distributing flyers explaining ACEs, discussing ACEs at parent-teacher conferences, and including information about ACEs in newsletters.

Finally, the Lead Agency provides training opportunities for early learning sites regarding behavior management through dissemination of informational emails, newsletters, webinars, and additional CCR&R training. Some information is tailored to early learning sites through on-site technical assistance visits in which providers can receive one-on-one support in this area.

9.3.7 Policies on the prevention of the suspension and expulsion of children

- a. The Lead Agency must have policies to prevent the suspension and expulsion of children from birth to age 5 in child care and other early childhood programs receiving CCDF funds. Describe those policies and how those policies are shared with families, providers, and the general public: **All licensed CCDF providers must establish in writing and prominently post or show parent’s signature of receipt of the policy to prevent suspension and expulsion of children. Providers must establish steps for addressing behaviors identified by the site as dangerous and/or out-of-control behaviors. Suspension or expulsions should only be considered as a final action after the implementation of behavior support strategies, including at a minimum engaging parents by written communication and/or parent conference and providing a referral to EarlySteps (Part C), Child Search, and/or mental health consultant if appropriate.**
- b. Describe what policies, if any, the Lead Agency has to prevent the suspension and

expulsion of school-age children from child or youth care settings receiving CCDF funds: **All licensed CCDF providers must establish steps for addressing behaviors identified by the site as dangerous and/or out-of-control behaviors. Suspension or expulsions should only be considered as a final action after the implementation of behavior support strategies, including at a minimum engaging parents by written communication and/or parent conference and providing a referral to Child Find/Search and Part B and/or mental health consultant if appropriate.**

9.4 Providing Information on Developmental Screenings

Lead Agencies must provide information on developmental screenings to parents as part of the intake process for families participating in CCDF and to child care providers through training and education. This information must include:

- Existing resources and services that the State can make available in conducting developmental screenings and providing referrals to services when appropriate for children who receive child care assistance, including the coordinated use of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program carried out under Title XIX of the Social Security Act and developmental screening services available under IDEA Part B, Section 619 and Part C; and,
- A description of how a family or child care provider can use these resources and services to obtain developmental screenings for children who receive subsidies and who might be at risk of cognitive or other developmental delays, which can include social, emotional, physical, or linguistic delays.

Information on developmental screenings, as in other consumer education information, must be accessible for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities.

9.4.1 Developmental screenings

Does the Lead Agency collect and disseminate information on the following:

- a. Existing resources and services available for obtaining developmental screening for parents receiving CCDF, the general public, and child care providers.
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- b. Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program—carried out under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.)—and developmental screening services available under Part B, Section 619 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.).
☒ Yes.
☐ No. If no, describe:
- c. Developmental screenings to parents receiving a subsidy as part of the intake process.
☒ Yes. If yes, include the information provided, ways it is provided, and any partners in this work: **To ensure that parents receiving a subsidy have adequate information regarding resources available, at intake all participants receive notice about Louisiana’s**

Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and instructions on how to download the Lead Agency's Developmental Screening Guidebook. The Developmental Screening Guidebook contains information about developmental milestones, to help families learn more about their child's development at each stage of life, and information about how families may get help for their child.

Community Networks also provide developmental screening information to parents when children are registered into early learning programs. Information that Community Networks may share with families includes developmental milestone information, the information gathered on an individual child from a utilized screening tool, and follow-up information.

☐ No. If no, describe:

- d. How families receiving CCDF services or child care providers receiving CCDF can use the available resources and services to obtain developmental screenings for children at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays.

☒ Yes.

☐ No. If no, describe:

10 Program Integrity and Accountability

Program integrity and accountability activities are integral to the effective administration of the CCDF program. As stewards of federal funds, Lead Agencies must ensure strong and effective internal controls to prevent fraud and maintain continuity of services to meet the needs of children and families. In order to operate and maintain a strong CCDF program, regular evaluation of the program's internal controls as well as comprehensive training for all entities involved in the administration of the program are imperative. In this section, Lead Agencies will describe their internal controls and how those internal controls effectively ensure integrity and accountability. These accountability measures should address reducing fraud, waste, and abuse, including program violations and administrative errors and should apply to all CCDF funds.

10.1 Effective Internal Controls

Lead Agencies must ensure the integrity of the use of CCDF funds through effective fiscal management and must ensure that financial practices are in place. Lead Agencies must have effective fiscal management practices in place for all CCDF expenditures.

10.1.1 Organizational structure to support integrity and internal controls

Describe how the Lead Agency's organizational structure ensures the oversight and implementation of effective internal controls that promote and support program integrity and accountability. Describe: **The separation of duties between fiscal and program staff is critical to effective control because it reduces the risk of both erroneous and inappropriate actions. Separation of duties implements checks and balances that help prevent issues that can negatively affect the CCDF program. Issues relating to budget and fiscal management are communicated through monthly meetings between fiscal and program staff and ongoing communications on program guidelines.**

Eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse of the program is very important to the Lead Agency, and the agency has put in place processes and procedures to manage the program and minimize the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse. The Lead Agency has an Internal Audit team that helps to identify and address risk. The CCAP team also works closely with state auditors on a recurring basis to review all aspects of the program and to identify possible weaknesses.

The Child Care Assistance Program Fraud Management Unit (FMU) was developed to reduce the risk of, identify, and investigate fraud. Clients (families), child care providers, and stakeholders, both internal and external, have access to the FMU to report any suspected fraudulent CCAP activity. FMU investigates all referred fraudulent circumstances as well as suspected fraud based on review of CCAP data. FMU staff review past and current activities of the providers and participants according to current CCAP policies. These audits may include review of time and attendance records, payment records, eligibility documentation, and eligibility determination. FMU staff document information of the monitoring, including discrepancies. Information from these circumstances is then used to determine what additional procedures might be needed to further deter fraudulent activity.

In regard to Child Care Assistance Program payments, the Lead Agency utilizes a weekly statewide authorization file for payments to providers based on enrolled children. This automated process utilizes active authorizations for each eligible child to calculate the weekly payments that are made to the provider two weeks after services have been provided. Utilization of authorizations are monitored through the KinderConnect attendance tracking system to ensure that payments are being issued for services authorized.

Even as the leaders at each level work together and serve as a resource for one another, the Lead Agency separates duties to help ensure integrity. For example, the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) team has separate program units conducting the determination of eligibility and issuing payments. Each unit also performs internal section reviews.

On the eligibility team, case readings are completed by supervisory staff and program specialists. Social service analyst supervisors conduct quarterly random case readings per analyst and program specialists. These random case readings can take place when a case is questioned by an external source. In addition, the supervisor conducts formal case readings per quarter on analysts' cases.

On the payments team, the program and quality specialists continue to run mock 403 reviews with the Record Review Worksheet (RRW) during non-federal review years, as a continued audit of payments, to prevent payment errors. This ongoing identification of possible payment errors consequently provides analysts with individualized training on payment errors. Each analyst has a payment error rate that is tracked by supervisors and management and encompasses both payment and administrative errors.

In regard to quality and infant/toddler programs, program staff oversee all contracts and review deliverables before payment can be made. All flowthrough funds are distributed through a system whereby the recipient must sign assurances that they will adhere to the allowable uses; they must also submit a budget, and Lead Agency staff review the budget and provide feedback and approval.

All expenses must be entered into a workflow system where the Director of Early Childhood Finance approves the spend and the assigned budget analyst from the Lead Agency finance office confirms and approves the funding and coding prior to the purchase. At that time, the validity and the cost of the purchase as well as the allowability is considered.

Include the following elements in your description:

1. Assignment of authority and responsibilities related to program integrity.
2. Delegation of duties.
3. Coordination of activities.
4. Communication between fiscal and program staff.
5. Segregation of duties.
6. Establishment of checks and balances to identify potential fraud risks.
7. Other activities that support program integrity.

10.1.2 Fiscal management practices

Describe how the Lead Agency ensures effective fiscal management practices for all CCDF expenditures, including:

- a. Fiscal oversight of CCDF funds, including grants and contracts. Describe: **Program staff oversee all contracts and review deliverables before payment can be made. All flowthrough funds are distributed through a system whereby the recipient must sign assurances that they will adhere to the allowable uses, as a preventive control; the recipient must also submit a budget, and Lead Agency staff review the budget and provide feedback and approval. This review encourages proper use of funds prior to release of funds.**

In regard to Child Care Assistance Program payments, the Lead Agency utilizes a weekly statewide authorization file for payments to providers based on enrolled children. This automated process utilizes active authorizations for each eligible child to calculate the weekly payments that are made to the provider two weeks after services have been provided. Utilization of authorizations are monitored through the KinderConnect attendance tracking system to ensure that payments are being issued for services authorized.

- b. Tracking systems that ensure reasonable and allowable costs and allow for tracing of funds to a level of expenditure adequate to establish that such funds have not been used in violation of the provision of this part. Describe: **All expenses must be entered into a workflow system where the Director of Early Childhood Finance approves the spend and the coding prior to the purchase. At that time, the validity and the cost of the purchase as well as the allowability is considered. In regard to Child Care Assistance Program payments, program and quality specialists continue to run 403 reviews with the Record Review Worksheet (RRW) during non-federal review years, as a continued audit of payments, to prevent payment errors.**
- c. Processes and procedures to prepare and submit required state and federal fiscal reporting. Describe: **The financial reporting staff of the agency is required to electronically**

submit the ACF-696 report 30 days after the end of each quarter. The agency uses its financial management system to track obligations and expenditures to ensure compliance and accuracy of the report.

- d. Other. Describe: **The agency has a financial management system that tracks the budget, obligation, and expenditures. There are ongoing communications between fiscal and program staff regarding grant requirements, planning, and spend-down of funds.**

10.1.3 Effectiveness of fiscal management practices

Describe how the Lead Agency knows there are effective fiscal management practices in place for all CCDF expenditures, including:

- a. How the Lead Agency defines effective fiscal management practices. Describe: **The Lead Agency defines effective fiscal management practice as the standard operating procedures designed to improve the proper execution of financial accounting, reporting, and budgeting.**
- b. How the Lead Agency measures and tracks results of their fiscal management practices. Describe: **Fiscal management practices are tracked and measured by the ability to spend funding in accordance with grant guidelines on allowable expenses within the grant available period.**
- c. How the results inform implementation. Describe: **The fiscal management results inform implementation through the ability to adequately plan and implement initiatives that can be accomplished through the grant availability period.**
- d. Other. Describe:

10.1.4 Identifying risk

Describe the processes the Lead Agency uses to identify risk in the CCDF program including:

- a. Each process used by the Lead Agency to identify risk (including entities responsible for implementing each process). Describe: **The Lead Agency Bureau of Internal Audit (BIA) annually conducts a Lead Agency-wide Risk Assessment in accordance with the Louisiana State Internal Audit Law and Professional Standard of the Institute of Internal Auditors.**

In addition, the CCAP Fraud Management Unit conducts various audits and reviews utilizing attendance logs, billing records, reports, payment files, and case records. The time and attendance audits determine whether a participant and/or provider are in compliance with CCAP policies, procedures, and regulations. The Lead Agency reviews excessive back scanning and discrepancy in attendance logs comparable to the attendance tracking system. CCAP cases are audited based on referrals, reports, requests, and at random by the FMU.

- b. The frequency of each risk assessment. Describe: **The Lead Agency's Bureau of Internal Audit Risk Assessment is conducted annually. The Fraud Management Unit (FMU) conducts reviews on a monthly or quarterly basis depending on the type of review.**
- c. How the Lead Agency uses risk assessment results to inform program improvement. Describe: **The Risk Assessment is used by the Lead Agency's Bureau of Internal Audit (BIA) as the basis for implementing the BIA annual audit plan. The FMU identifies trends for**

assessment of the system, training needed for staff, and technical assistance needed for providers.

- d. How the Lead Agency knows that the risk assessment processes utilized are effective. Describe: **The Annual Risk Assessment and all other audit projects conducted by the Lead Agency's BIA are reported to the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the State Superintendent of Education, the Louisiana Legislative Auditor, and all other appropriate State and Federal officials, as necessary or required by law. The FMU works directly with outside entities, when contract funding allows, for audit and risk assessment of the effectiveness of the processes and controls in place.**
- e. Other. Describe:

10.1.5 Processes to train about CCDF requirements and program integrity

Describe the processes the Lead Agency uses to train staff of the Lead Agency and other agencies engaged in the administration of CCDF, and child care providers about program requirements and integrity.

- a. Describe how the Lead Agency ensures that all staff who administer the CCDF program (including through MOUs, grants, and contracts) are informed and trained regarding program requirements and integrity.
 - i. Describe the training provided to staff members around CCDF program requirements and program integrity: **CCAP staff receive annual training on program policies and procedures. Staff also receive additional ongoing individual and/or team training based on trending occurrences. The Lead Agency has regular internal meetings with staff to review the program, consider any modifications, and continuously make improvements.**

The Lead Agency's Licensing staff receive supervised training for up to 3 months once hired. A mid-point review is conducted 3 months after hire to determine whether the staff is ready to work unsupervised. Then a final review is conducted at the 6-month mark. If determined to work individually, the staff will receive continuous weekly internal meetings with the direct Supervisor, then monthly internal meetings led by the Program Managers with all Licensing staff. There is additional internal training conducted annually.

The Lead Agency's Child Care Criminal Background Check staff receive supervised training for up to a month once hired. When determined to be ready to work individually, the newly-hired staff member then continues to receive weekly internal training with all staff. Additionally, new hires' CCCBC System permissions are set and monitored by the CCCBC Program Manager for alterations on a monthly basis, until a CCCBC team member is promoted to a Program Specialist position. New hires cannot issue final determinations for CCCBC applications with given system permissions.

The Lead Agency's Strategy team receives weekly support from the early childhood finance team members regarding administration of contracts and allocations for quality and infant/toddler programs.

- ii. Describe how staff training is evaluated for effectiveness: **The Lead Agency's CCAP staff trainings are evaluated for effectiveness through staff feedback and surveys following the given training. The individual staff error rates, the agency overall error rate, and individual quality reviews help to identify possible areas of improvement and further needed training. Also, provider inquiries in the help desk portal and responses from the CCAP team are reviewed for accuracy and effectiveness. In the event the Program Manager identifies recurring errors, staff training is re-evaluated and adjusted to be more effective.**

The Lead Agency's Licensing staff training is evaluated for effectiveness through weekly quality reviews of their work. The quality reviews consist of the Internal Program Manager and Director reviewing the processing of initial, renewal, and change request applications to ensure accuracy and timeliness. The Field Program Manager and Director review monitoring inspections of sites to ensure accuracy and clear and concise description of deficiencies, if applicable. The Internal Program Manager and Director review the intake of complaints and incidents to ensure accuracy of information received and timeliness. The Internal Program Manager and Director review responses to providers to ensure accuracy of information, and these internal quality reviews help with determining further staff training needs. In the event the Program Manager identifies recurring errors, staff training is re-evaluated and adjusted to be more effective.

The Lead Agency's Child Care Criminal Background Check staff receive monthly quality reviews of their work to include application processing, verbal responses to providers, and written responses to providers, to evaluate effectiveness of training received. In the event the Program Manager identifies recurring errors, staff training is re-evaluated and adjusted to be more effective.

- iii. Describe how the Lead Agency uses program integrity data (e.g., error rate results, risk assessment data) to inform ongoing staff training needs: **CCAP staff receive annual training on all program policies and procedures. In addition, staff receive additional ongoing individual and/or team training based on trending occurrences. Louisiana follows a system of tracking individual staff errors and incoming complaints. This helps to tailor training to individual staff needs and to plan both large and small group training on all topics and areas of need.**
- b. Describe how the Lead Agency ensures all providers for children receiving CCDF funds are informed and trained regarding CCDF program requirements and program integrity:
 - i. Describe the training for providers around CCDF program requirements and program integrity: **Providers receive training that guides program integrity during monthly early childhood webinars, other provider training during the year, technical assistance as needed, and updates and reminders via the early childhood newsletter.**

In addition, the Licensing Team offers to CCDF and non-CCDF providers a new provider orientation on licensing rules and regulations for owners and directors prior to issuing a license to operate. Also, there is an initial inspection prior to issuing a license to operate that is completed with the new provider, where

regulations and requirements are discussed.

In addition, the CCCBC team offers two annual webinar trainings to provide technical assistance and to share updates and reminders. The CCCBC team presents at various meetings, and team members are available for individual questions as needed by the provider. The CCCBC team provides prompt response to questions when asked via email and phone communication.

- ii. Describe how provider training is evaluated for effectiveness: **The Lead Agency's Child Care Assistance Program team provides an open loop during trainings in which providers can ask questions as the webinar or in-person training is being conducted. Staff monitor this loop and provide feedback and answers to questions. Staff make further, follow-up contact with providers when needed, for more detailed responses or individual situations. Questions asked during these training opportunities are used to direct future training and provide on-going clarity and resources. The administration also collaborates with other outside agencies that work directly with providers and families in the field to determine the effectiveness of messaging, training, and resources. Providers can also send e-mails directly to management, and the level of understanding and clarity reflected in these e-mails is also used as an internal measurement of existing training effectiveness and a tool for identifying concerns and additional training needs.**

After the new provider orientation is completed with the Lead Agency's Licensing team, an assessment is given to participants to evaluate effectiveness of the training. If the new provider answers more than 4 of the assessment questions incorrectly, an on-site visit is scheduled with the provider. Monitoring inspections are also conducted to evaluate effectiveness

The Lead Agency's Child Care Criminal Background Check Section provides a segment after a webinar or training where providers can ask questions. Questions asked by providers are used to measure effectiveness. Concerns are utilized to evaluate future training.

- iii. Describe how the Lead Agency uses program integrity data (e.g., error rate results, risk assessment data) to inform ongoing provider training needs: **As described above, the Lead Agency uses information received as an on-going assessment to identify risk areas or areas of external concern. As questions are answered in the Provider Help Desk Ticket system, data is gathered on the inquiry and used as a tool to inform future decisions, identify areas of concern, monitor error and program effectiveness, and also identify risk.**

The Lead Agency's CCCBC Section uses information received as an on-going assessment to identify risk areas. Trainings are provided according to areas of concern.

The Lead Agency's Licensing section uses information from monitoring inspections, on-site technical assistance visits, and provider orientation training to inform ongoing provider training needs.

10.1.6 Evaluate internal control activities

Describe how the Lead Agency uses the following to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of Lead Agency internal control activities for all CCDF expenditures.

- a. Error rate review triennial report results (if applicable). Describe who this information is shared with and how the Lead Agency uses the information to evaluate the effectiveness of its internal controls: **Members of the Lead Agency's Early Childhood team (including the Child Care Assistance Program leaders and the Early Childhood executive team members) review the triennial report and determine what processes or policies could be changed or put in place to improve the Lead Agency's error rate. Information about the triennial review is also shared with all members of the CCAP payments and internal training team. Program managers use this information in vision forward planning to identify risk and in the formation and revision of internal policy and procedures.**
- b. Audit results. Describe who this information is shared with and how the Lead Agency uses the information to evaluate the effectiveness of its internal controls: **Audit results are shared with Lead Agency CCDF team members and leaders, including the Early Childhood executive team members, and with the Lead Agency executive team, including the State Superintendent of Education. Audit results are used as a planning tool for training and as a tool for monitoring and strengthening internal controls.**
- c. Other. Describe who this information is shared with and how the Lead Agency uses the information to evaluate the effectiveness of its internal controls: **The Lead Agency conducts attendance and billing reviews, record matching and database linkage, random sampling, process monitoring, and compliance resources. Information found in these reviews is discussed by program management during vision forward meetings and is used to guide planning, implement needed changes, and identify and assess areas of potential concerns.**

10.1.7 Identified weaknesses in internal controls

Has the Lead Agency or other entity identified any weaknesses in its internal controls?

- a. ☐ No. If no, describe when and how it was most recently determined that there were no weaknesses in the Lead Agency's internal controls.
- b. ☒ Yes. If yes, what were the indicators? How did you use the information to strengthen your internal controls? **Indicators of weak or nonexistent internal controls were identified as a result of the audit procedures and testing conducted by the Bureau of Internal Audit and reported to the Superintendent of Education & Board of Elementary & Secondary Education in accordance with regulatory guidance. Specifically, the ability for management override of specific information in the data system, with limited oversight of changes, was identified as an indicator of weakness in internal controls. In response the Lead Agency has built in new and additional internal controls to remove the weakness in this identified area.**

10.2 Fraud Investigation, Payment Recovery, and Sanctions

Lead Agencies must have the necessary controls to identify fraud and other program violations to ensure program integrity. Program violations can include both intentional and unintentional client

and/or provider violations, as defined by the Lead Agency. These violations and errors, identified through the error-rate review process and other review processes, may result in payment or nonpayment (administrative) errors and may or may not be the result of fraud, based on the Lead Agency definition.

10.2.1 Strategies used to identify and prevent program violations

Check the activities the Lead Agency employs to ensure program integrity, and for each checked activity, identify what type of program violations the activity addresses, describe the activity and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis.

- a. **[x]** Share/match data from other programs (e.g., TANF program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Medicaid) or other databases (e.g., State Directory of New Hires, Social Security Administration, Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS)).

- i. **[x]** Intentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **During the eligibility process and case review process the Lead Agency compares data provided in the Equifax Work Number database (which is a digital verification service) and the Louisiana Immunization Network for Kids Statewide (LINKS) central registry with information provided in family Child Care Assistance Program applications. Using the Equifax system, analysts are able to verify letters of separation from previous jobs, identify when jobs may be intentionally or unintentionally omitted on an application, and assist families in reporting all income when a transition from one program to another occurs. Utilization of Work Number and LINKS allows CCAP staff to expedite processing times, validate documentation, and eliminate the need of requesting additional documentation from participants' applications.**

In addition, data regarding provider compliance is provided by the Louisiana Division of Nutrition Support to the Fraud Management Unit. In addition to working to identify and prevent fraud and misrepresentation by providers, the Fraud Management Unit (FMU) also works directly with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)' Strategies To Empower People (STEP) Program regarding fraud and intentional program violations by families and/or providers.

- ii. **[x]** Unintentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Equifax Work Number database (which is a digital verification service) data is collected and is used by the Lead Agency as a tool to address unintentional program violations. Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) analysts have the ability to see employment information that is reported to the state using this system. Access to this system helps to prevent fraud in the transition of cases, when the time is appropriate, from the TANF-funded Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Program to a regular low-income CCAP case. Using the Equifax system, analysts are able to verify separation from previous jobs, identify when jobs may be intentionally or unintentionally omitted on an application, and assist families in reporting all income when a transition from one program to another occurs.**

- iii. **[x]** Agency errors. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Ongoing case sampling reviews help program administrators identify processing errors using the internal errors process and provide both individual and programmatic intervention through training opportunities.**
- b. **[x]** Run system reports that flag errors (include types).
 - i. **[x]** Intentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **The Lead Agency utilizes a web-based reporting application that interfaces with eligibility payment processing systems to generate reports of possible discrepancies in payments and eligibility determination. Types of reports include the following: cases closed for sufficient income, previous check-in / previous check-out, location identifier, underutilized authorizations, and care provided outside of hours.**
 - ii. **[x]** Unintentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **As the Fraud Management Unit team reviews reports, trends are identified and brought to the attention of management during bi-weekly high-priority case reviews. During these reviews, provider and participant case information is discussed, along with needed changes to policy and/or procedure, when trends indicate continuous concerns in specific areas. Once these internal meetings (which include representatives from Legal, Administration, CCCBC, Licensing, and EC Strategy) occur, changes to procedure and policy and additional training results if necessary.**
 - iii. **[x]** Agency errors. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Red flag reports include information about excessive back scans, scans outside of hours, scans outside of location, and provider-participant address matches. These reports help to identify not only intentional and unintentional program violations but also can indicate errors made by the Lead Agency's provider certification, participant eligibility certification, or payments teams. When these errors are found, program management reviews collected data during high-priority meetings. This trend data drives changes to internal controls.**
- c. **[x]** Review enrollment documents and attendance or billing records.
 - i. **[x]** Intentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Through monitoring of provider records and red flag reports such as excessive back scan reports or outside of hours reports, the Lead Agency may request a provider's manual attendance records for internal review, to compare to the site's billing request and/or billing records. Excessive back scans by full-time enrolled families, outside of hours attendance scans, and participant and provider address matches can all be an indicator of intentional or unintentional fraud as well as administrative error. This data is examined during bi-weekly meetings, and when trends are observed, changes to procedure and or policy may occur to mitigate risk.**
 - ii. **[x]** Unintentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Through monitoring of provider**

records and “red flag” reports such as excessive back scan reports or outside of hours reports, the Lead Agency may request a provider's manual attendance records for internal review, to compare to the site’s billing request and/or billing records. Excessive back scans by full-time enrolled families, outside of hours attendance scans, and participant and provider address matches can all be an indicator of intentional or unintentional fraud as well as administrative error. This data is examined during bi-weekly meetings, and when trends are observed, changes to procedure and or policy may occur to mitigate risk.

- iii. **[x]** Agency errors. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Inadvertent errors are identified and found through case reviews and internal audit findings. Violations may also be submitted to fraud from other areas. Excessive back scans by full-time enrolled families, outside of hours attendance scans, and participant and provider address matches can all be an indicator of intentional or unintentional fraud as well as administrative error. This data is examined during bi-weekly meetings, and when trends are observed, changes to procedure and or policy may occur to mitigate risk.**
- d. **[x]** Conduct supervisory staff reviews or quality assurance reviews.
 - i. **[x]** Intentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Case readings are completed by supervisory staff. Eligibility supervisors conduct formal case readings each month per analyst. Social service analyst supervisors conduct monthly random case readings per analyst and program specialists. These random case readings can take place when a case is questioned by an external source, such as cases that receive a complaint, and as a part of the ACF 403 monitoring process. Random samples are extracted to analyze payment and administrative errors and to ensure program integrity during the enrollment and eligibility process.**
 - ii. **[x]** Unintentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **During supervisor review, data is collected on specific cases that allow management to look for trends that indicate intentional and unintentional program violations and also administrative error. As a result of this review of data, changes can occur to policy and procedures and additional training both for internal staff and external stakeholders can occur.**
 - iii. **[x]** Agency errors. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **During supervisor review, data is collected on specific cases that allows management to look for trends that indicate intentional and unintentional program violations and also administrative error. As a result of this review of data, changes can occur to policy and procedures and additional training both for internal staff and external stakeholders can occur.**
- e. **[x]** Audit provider records.
 - i. **[x]** Intentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Retrospective and prospective audits are completed on provider billing records, on compliance guidance, and through internal and external referrals. Based on the information provided during**

the referral, complaint, and the preliminary investigation, audits of providers are prioritized based on the seriousness of the allegation and based on the recovery amounts. Louisiana follows an approved written audit procedure which guides the audit of provider records, monitoring, and training in each allegation. Whether resulting from an external complaint or an internal Lead Agency discovery, as a result of intentional program violations or unintentional program violations, a provider or participant may receive a written notice of violation and the Lead Agency may conduct a technical assistance visit with the provider. For more egregious offenses where intentional program violations are indicated, suspension of eligibility for a period, or in extreme cases of non-compliance, termination of certification and a period of ineligibility, is imposed, if deemed necessary.

- ii. **[x]** Unintentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Retrospective and prospective audits are completed on provider billing records, on compliance guidance, and through internal and external referrals. Based on the information provided during the referral, complaint, and the preliminary investigation, audits of providers are prioritized based on the seriousness of the allegation and based on the recovery amounts. Louisiana follows an approved written audit procedure which guides the audit of provider records, monitoring, and training in each allegation. Whether resulting from an external complaint or an internal Lead Agency discovery, as a result of intentional program violations or unintentional program violations, a provider or participant may receive a written notice of violation and the Lead Agency may conduct a technical assistance visit with the provider. For more egregious offenses where intentional program violations are indicated, suspension of eligibility for a period, or in extreme cases of non-compliance, termination of certification and a period of ineligibility, is imposed, if deemed necessary.**
- iii. **[x]** Agency errors. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **When agency error is noted during audit, program management uses this information to inform procedure and policy changes and for individual and programmatic training.**
- f. **[x]** Train staff on policy and/or audits.
 - i. **[x]** Intentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Staff receive annual training on all program policies and procedures. In addition, staff receive ongoing individual and/or team training based on trending occurrences. Louisiana follows an approved system of tracking individual staff errors and incoming complaints. This helps program administration tailor training to individual staff needs and plan both large and small group training on all topics and areas of need. Furthermore, staff are trained to review all documentation for accuracy, report all instances of misleading statements or misrepresentation of relevant facts, and report suspected evidence to supervisors for review.**
 - ii. **[x]** Unintentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Staff receive annual training on all program policies and procedures. In addition, staff receive ongoing individual and/or team training based on trending occurrences. Louisiana follows an**

approved system of tracking individual staff errors and incoming complaints. This helps program administration tailor training to individual staff needs and plan both large and small group training on all topics and areas of need. Furthermore, staff are trained to review all documentation for accuracy, report all instances of misleading statements or misrepresentation of relevant facts, and report suspected evidence to supervisors for review.

- iii. ☒ Agency errors. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice: **Louisiana follows an approved system of tracking individual staff errors and incoming complaints. This helps program administration tailor training to individual staff needs and plan both large and small group training on all topics and areas of need. Each analyst has an individual error rate based on the sampling of cases. This data is used to determine agency error trends and plan ongoing training during monthly meetings and the annual CCAP staff training. Staff receive annual training on all program policies and procedures. In addition, staff receive ongoing individual and/or team training based on trending, common, recurring case errors and methods to prevent administrative errors.**

g. ☐ Other. Describe the activity(ies):

- i. ☐ Intentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice:
- ii. ☐ Unintentional program violations. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice:
- iii. ☐ Agency errors. Describe the activities, the results of these activities, and how they inform better practice:

10.2.2 Identification and recovery of misspent funds

Lead Agencies must identify and recover misspent funds that are a result of fraud, and they have the option to recover any misspent funds that are a result of unintentional program violations or agency errors.

- a. Identify which agency is responsible for pursuing fraud and overpayments (e.g., State Office of the Inspector General, State Attorney): **If the participant and/or provider has been determined to have committed fraud or intentional program violation, the participant and/or provider will be required to repay all improperly paid benefits and is ineligible to receive child care assistance program funding during the disqualification period. The Lead Agency collaborates with the Office of Debt Recovery, within the Louisiana Department of Revenue and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, to collect any debt owed to the state as a result of fraud.**
- b. Check and describe all activities, including the results of such activity, that the Lead Agency uses to investigate and recover improper payments due to fraud. Consider in your response potential fraud committed by providers, clients, staff, vendors, and contractors. Include in the description how each activity assists in the investigation and recovery of improper payment due to fraud or intentional program violations. Activities can include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. ☒ Require recovery after a minimum dollar amount of an improper payment and

identify the minimum dollar amount. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **There is no minimum recovery threshold, and action will be taken to recover all payments made for 1) ineligible households that are currently participating in the program; 2) any ineligible household resulting from the household's act of fraud, such as the submission of false or altered documents or information, intentionally making a false or misleading statement, or misrepresenting, concealing, or withholding relevant fact; 3) any ineligible household resulting from errors that are discovered in a quality control review; 4) an ineligible provider resulting from any act of fraud, such as the submission of false or altered documents or information, noncompliance with all state and federal grant guidance for compliance, intentionally making a false or misleading statement, or misrepresenting, concealing, or withholding relevant fact; and 4) any ineligible service that results in an improper overpayment.**

- ii. **[x] Coordinate with and refer to the other State/Territory agencies (e.g., State/Territory collection agency, law enforcement agency). Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: The Lead Agency collaborates with the Office of Debt Recovery (ODR), within the Louisiana Department of Revenue and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, to recover improper payments. When the Lead Agency issues an initial notification for payment due, if no payment is received by 30 days from that initial payment due date, the Lead Agency sends a courtesy reminder notification. If no payment is received by 60 days from that initial payment due date, the debt is considered delinquent, and the Lead Agency sends that notification. If no payment is received by 30 days from that delinquent payment notice, a final notice is sent, with the date that the case will be referred to the ODR. If payment is still not received by that referral date, the case is transferred to the ODR.**
- iii. **[x] Recover through repayment plans. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: The Fraud Management Unit (FMU) is responsible for notifying the household(s) and/or provider(s) of the improper payment and identifies the responsible party for the overpayment. A Repayment Agreement is sent out to the responsible party with repayment options, either for the provider to choose that the Lead Agency deduct and withhold funds from any CCAP reimbursement payment or for the provider to elect to return funds within 10 calendar days. The agreement is due back within 10 calendar days from the date on the agreement. All monthly payments begin on the 1st of the month following the month in which the repayment agreement is signed by the debtor.**
- iv. **[x] Reduce payments in subsequent months. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: Providers who are identified as the responsible party for the improper payment are allowed to have the money to be recouped "deducted" from future deposits of CCAP electronic payments by selecting that option on their Repayment Agreement. When this option is selected, the Lead Agency will set up automatic payments to be withheld from the provider's future electronic payment on specific dates. When payments are successfully withheld, the provider debt to the Lead Agency is reduced by the**

confirmed payment amount. A manual payment option is also available to reduce debt amount to the Lead Agency, in which providers can elect to return the funds via check back to the Lead Agency.

- v. **[x]** Recover through State/Territory tax intercepts. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **When the debtor fails to make payment to the Office of Debt Recovery (ODR) to clear debt with the Lead Agency, the Office of Debt Recovery or affiliates will intercept, seize, or garnish any state tax refund in the name of any debtor who is listed in the ODR's electronic debt registry as owing a delinquent final debt.**
 - vi. **[x]** Recover through other means. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Office of Debt Recovery (ODR) may establish and use an electronic Financial Institution Data Match System, as authorized in La. R.S. 47:1677, for comparison of certain account information held by financial institutions. When the debtor fails to make payments, the ODR can intercept, seize, or garnish any monies identified in an account that is in the name of any debtor who is listed in the ODR's electronic debt registry as owing a delinquent final debt. The Office of Debt Recovery will give the Lead Agency notice thirty days prior to the utilization of any collection tool not specified by La. R.S. 47:1676, such as offset from income taxes or other accounts payable.**
 - vii. **[x]** Establish a unit to investigate and collect improper payments and describe the composition of the unit. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Lead Agency has a program integrity and accountability unit within the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education that investigates internal and external referrals, ensures effective controls, and identifies areas of risk. This unit, called the Fraud Management Unit, performs audits on provider billing records and grants compliance and recovers improper payments according to established policies and procedures in addition to federal and state laws. The Lead Agency Bureau of Internal Audit may be asked to audit as well. The team is comprised of the FMU Program Consultant, Investigator, Auditor, Recovery Specialist, and administrative support staff.**
 - viii. **[x]** Other. Describe the activities and the results of these activities: **If the participant and/or provider has been determined to have committed fraud or intentional program violation, the participant and/or provider will be required to repay all improperly paid benefits. Furthermore, ineligible providers are not eligible for grants, other certification or license approval, or other Lead Agency funding approval. Providers' and/or participants' certification period of time following the termination or closure of CCAP during the disqualification period may result in a sanction: 12 months funding disqualification for the first violation, 24 months funding disqualification for the second violation, and permanent funding disqualification for the third violation.**
- c. Does the Lead Agency investigate and recover improper payments due to unintentional program violations?
- []** No.
- [x]** Yes.

If yes, check and describe below any activities that the Lead Agency will use to investigate and recover improper payments due to unintentional program violations. Include in the description how each activity assists in the investigation and recovery of improper payments due to unintentional program violations. Include a description of the results of such activity.

- i. **[x]** Require recovery after a minimum dollar amount of an improper payment and identify the minimum dollar amount. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **Inadvertent household errors require a minimum \$125 recovery threshold to be met, and the household must be an inactive participant of the program. Action will be taken to recover all other inadvertent household and/or provider errors that result in improper payments made on behalf of ineligible households and any ineligible service that results in an improper overpayment.**
- ii. **[x]** Coordinate with and refer to the other State/Territory agencies (e.g., State/Territory collection agency, law enforcement agency). Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Lead Agency collaborates with the Office of Debt Recovery (ODR), within the Louisiana Department of Revenue and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, to recover improper payments. When the Lead Agency issues an initial notification for payment due, if no payment is received by 30 days from that initial payment due date, the Lead Agency sends a courtesy reminder notification. If no payment is received by 60 days from that initial payment due date, the debt is considered delinquent, and the Lead Agency sends that notification. If no payment is received by 30 days from that delinquent payment notice, a final notice is sent, with the date that the case will be referred to the ODR. If payment is still not received by that referral date, the case is transferred to the ODR.**
- iii. **[x]** Recover through repayment plans. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Fraud Management Unit (FMU) is responsible for notifying household(s) and/or provider(s) of improper payment and identifies the responsible party for the overpayment. A Repayment Agreement is sent out to the responsible party for repayment and is due back within 10 calendar days from the date on the agreement. All monthly payments begin on the 1st of the month following the month in which the repayment agreement is signed by the debtor.**
- iv. **[x]** Reduce payments in subsequent months. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **Providers are allowed to have the money to be recouped via deduction from future deposits of CCAP electronic payments by selecting that option on their Repayment Agreement. When this option is selected, the Lead Agency will set up automatic payments to be withheld from the provider's future electronic payment on specific dates. When payments are successfully withheld, the provider debt to the Lead Agency is reduced by the confirmed payment amount.**
- v. **[x]** Recover through State/Territory tax intercepts. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **When the debtor fails to make payment to the Office of Debt Recovery (ODR) to clear debt with the Lead**

Agency, the Office of Debt Recovery or affiliates will intercept, seize, or garnish any state tax refund in the name of any debtor who is listed in the ODR's electronic debt registry as owing a delinquent final debt.

- vi. ☒ Recover through other means. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Office of Debt Recovery (ODR) may establish and use an electronic Financial Institution Data Match System, as authorized in La. R.S. 47:1677, for comparison of certain account information held by financial institutions. When the debtor fails to make payments, the ODR can intercept, seize, or garnish any monies identified in an account that is in the name of any debtor who is listed in the ODR's electronic debt registry as owing a delinquent final debt. The Office of Debt Recovery will give the Lead Agency notice thirty days prior to the utilization of any collection tool not specified by La. R.S. 47:1676, such as offset from income taxes or other accounts payable.**
- vii. ☒ Establish a unit to investigate and collect improper payments and describe the composition of the unit. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Lead Agency has a program integrity and accountability unit within the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education that investigates internal and external referrals, ensures effective controls, and identifies areas of risk. This unit, called the Fraud Management Unit, performs audits on provider billing records and compliance and recovers improper payments according to established policies and procedures in addition to federal and state laws. The Lead Agency Bureau of Internal Audit may be asked to audit as well.**
- viii. ☒ Other. Describe the activities and the results of these activities: **If the participant and/or provider has been determined to have committed fraud or intentional program violation, the participant and/or provider will be required to repay all improperly paid benefits. Furthermore, ineligible providers are not eligible for grants, other certification or license approval, or other Lead Agency funding approval. Providers' and/or participants' certification period of time following the termination or closure of CCAP during the disqualification period may result in a sanction: 12 months funding disqualification for the first violation, 24 months funding disqualification for the second violation, and permanent funding disqualification for the third violation.**

d. Does the Lead Agency investigate and recover improper payments due to agency errors?

☐ No.

☒ Yes.

If yes, check and describe all activities that the Lead Agency will use to investigate and recover improper payments due to agency errors. Include in the description how each activity assists in the investigation and recovery of improper payments due to administrative errors. Include a description of the results of such activity.

- i. ☒ Require recovery after a minimum dollar amount of an improper payment and identify the minimum dollar amount. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **All CCAP payments made on behalf of ineligible households are subject to action to recover the payments, with**

the exception of inadvertent household and administrative error claims in the amount of \$125 or less for households who are not currently participating in CCAP.

- ii. **[x]** Coordinate with and refer to the other State/Territory agencies (e.g., State/Territory collection agency, law enforcement agency). Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Lead Agency collaborates with the Office of Debt Recovery (ODR), within the Louisiana Department of Revenue and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office, to recover improper payments. When the Lead Agency issues an initial notification for payment due, if no payment is received by 30 days from that initial payment due date, the Lead Agency sends a courtesy reminder notification. If no payment is received by 60 days from that initial payment due date, the debt is considered delinquent, and the Lead Agency sends that notification. If no payment is received by 30 days from that delinquent payment notice, a final notice is sent, with the date that the case will be referred to the ODR. If payment is still not received by that referral date, the case is transferred to the ODR.**
- iii. **[x]** Recover through repayment plans. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Fraud Management Unit (FMU) is responsible for notifying household(s) and/or provider(s) of improper payment and identifies the responsible party for the overpayment. A Repayment Agreement is sent out to the responsible party for repayment and is due back within 10 calendar days from the date on the agreement. All monthly payments begin on the 1st of the month following the month in which the repayment agreement is signed by the debtor.**
- iv. **[x]** Reduce payments in subsequent months. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **Providers are allowed to have the money to be recouped via "deduction" from future deposits of CCAP electronic payments by selecting that option on their Repayment Agreement. When this option is selected, the Lead Agency will set up automatic payments to be withheld from the provider's future electronic payment on specific dates. When payments are successfully withheld, the provider debt to the Lead Agency is reduced by the confirmed payment amount.**
- v. **[x]** Recover through State/Territory tax intercepts. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **When the debtor fails to make payment to the Office of Debt Recovery (ODR) to clear debt with the Lead Agency, the Office of Debt Recovery or affiliates will intercept, seize, or garnish any state tax refund in the name of any debtor who is listed in the ODR's electronic debt registry as owing a delinquent final debt.**
- vi. **[x]** Recover through other means. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Office of Debt Recovery (ODR) may establish and use an electronic Financial Institution Data Match System, as authorized in La. R.S. 47:1677, for comparison of certain account information held by financial institutions. When the debtor fails to make payments, the ODR can intercept, seize, or garnish any monies identified in an account that is in the name of any debtor who is listed in the ODR's electronic debt registry as owing a**

delinquent final debt. The Office of Debt Recovery will give the Lead Agency notice thirty days prior to the utilization of any collection tool not specified by La. R.S. 47:1676, such as offset from income taxes or other accounts payable.

- vii. ☒ Establish a unit to investigate and collect improper payments and describe the composition of the unit. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **The Lead Agency has a program integrity and accountability unit within the Office of Early Childhood Care and Education that investigates internal and external referrals, ensures effective controls, and identifies areas of risk. This unit, called the Fraud Management Unit (FMU), performs audits on provider billing records and compliance and recovers improper payments according to established policies and procedures in addition to federal and state laws. The Lead Agency Bureau of Internal Audit may be asked to audit as well.**
- viii. ☐ Other. Describe the activities and the results of these activities:
- e. What type of sanction will the Lead Agency place on clients and providers to help reduce improper payments due to intentional program violations or fraud? Check and describe all that apply:
 - i. ☒ Disqualify the client. Describe this process, including a description of the appeal process for clients who are disqualified. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **When an intentional program violation or fraud is established, the Lead Agency will send notice of disqualification or termination to the household. The Fraud Management Unit (FMU) will take action with the appropriate approved penalty. A household may be disqualified for 12 months for the first violation, 24 months for the 2nd violation, and permanently for the 3rd violation.**

When an applicant/co-applicant does not agree with the action that has been taken by the Fraud Management Unit (FMU) staff, the FMU Supervisor will first address the issue informally, by contacting the client, explaining the reason for the disqualification, and answering any questions the client may have in reference to the sanction. If the discrepancy cannot be resolved informally, the following dispute process must be followed:

1. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of the decision notice, the applicant or co-applicant must send a written request of dispute to the CCAP Eligibility Program Manager. The Program Manager and the Executive Director of Early Childhood Operations review the request, and then a written correspondence is sent within ten calendar days of receipt of the request.
2. Written notice is considered given (a) when it is sent by email or fax to the last email address or fax number furnished to the Lead Agency, (b) when it is hand-delivered, or (3) on the fifth calendar day after it was mailed to the last mailing address furnished to the Lead Agency.
3. If the applicant or co-applicant is not satisfied with the decision of the CCAP Eligibility Program Manager and the Executive Director of Early Childhood Operations, the applicant or co-applicant must send a written request for a final dispute to the Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education

within 15 calendar days of receipt of the decision notice sent from the CCAP Eligibility Program Manager. The Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education has 15 calendar days to review the request and respond in writing.

The decision of the Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education is final. All requests for appeal and responses must be in writing. If the applicant or co-applicant misses the timeline, the right to dispute is forfeited. All disputes sent by applicant or co-applicant will be counted as sent on the date as postmarked.

- ii. [x] Disqualify the provider. Describe this process, including a description of the appeal process for providers who are disqualified. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis: **When intentional program violation or fraud is established, the Lead Agency will send notice to the provider to be disqualified. For the first violation, the Lead Agency will issue a written notice of violation that informs the provider that continued or additional violations may result in revocation or refusal to renew certification and a period of ineligibility. For the second violation, the Lead Agency will issue a second written notice of violation that includes a Corrective Action Plan that must be implemented immediately. For the third violation, the Department will terminate certification and impose a period of ineligibility of 12 months, 24 months, or permanently.**

When a provider does not agree with the action that has been taken by the Fraud Management Unit (FMU) staff, the FMU Supervisor will first address the issue informally. If the discrepancy cannot be resolved informally, the following dispute process must be followed:

1. Within 30 calendar days of receipt of the decision notice, the applicant or co-applicant must send a written request of dispute to the CCAP Eligibility Program Manager. The Program Manager and the Executive Director of Early Childhood Operations review the request, and then a written correspondence is sent within ten calendar days of receipt of the request.
2. Written notice is considered given (a) when it is sent by email or fax to the last email address or fax number furnished to the Lead Agency, (b) when it is hand-delivered, or (3) on the fifth calendar day after it was mailed to the last mailing address furnished to the Lead Agency.
3. If the applicant or co-applicant is not satisfied with the decision of the CCAP Eligibility Program Manager and the Executive Director of Early Childhood Operations, the applicant or co-applicant must send a written request for a final dispute to the Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education within 15 calendar days of receipt of the decision notice sent from the CCAP Eligibility Program Manager. The Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education has 15 calendar days to review the request and respond in writing.

The decision of the Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education is final. All requests for appeal and responses must be in writing. If the applicant or co-applicant misses the timeline, the right to dispute is forfeited. All disputes sent by applicant or co-applicant will be counted as sent on the date as

postmarked.

- iii. ☐ Prosecute criminally. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis:
- iv. ☐ Other. Describe the activities and the results of these activities based on the most recent analysis:

Appendix 1: Lead Agency Implementation Plan

The Appendix will be available for Lead Agencies to use in CARS after the Plan approval letter is issued.

For each non-compliance, Lead Agencies must describe the following:

- **Action Steps:** List the action steps needed to correct the finding (e.g., update policy manual, legislative approval, IT system changes, etc.). For each action step list the:
 - ***Responsible Entity:*** Indicate the entity (e.g., agency, team, etc.) responsible for completing the action step.
 - ***Expected Completion Date:*** List the expected completion date for the action step.
- **Overall Target Date for Compliance:** List date Lead Agency anticipates completing implementation, achieving full compliance with all aspects of the findings. (Note: Compliance will not be determined until the FFY 2025-2027 CCDF Plan is amended and approved).

Appendix 1: Form

[Plan question with non-compliance and associated provision will pre-populate based on preliminary notice of non-compliance]

A. Action Steps for Implementation	B. Responsible Entity(ies)	C. Expected Completion Date
Step 1:		
Step 2 (as necessary):		
[Additional steps added as necessary]		
Overall Target Date for Compliance:		