



COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

Department of Social Services-Economic Security

Child Support ♦ Day Care ♦ Fair Hearings ♦ Fraud ♦ HEAP ♦ Medicaid ♦ SNAP ♦ Systems ♦ Temporary Assistance

JOHN H. MULROY CIVIC CENTER

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SYRACUSE, NY 13202

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Ryan McMahon

County Executive

Sarah G. Merrick

DSS-ES Commissioner

May 19, 2025

Dear Families and Child Care Providers of Our Community:

Onondaga County is currently reviewing the rate of spending as to the level of child care assistance funds available. Our current allocation countywide is \$44.5 million. Over the last few years spending on child care assistance has increased 22% due to three major factors:

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

Because of these three factors, Onondaga County must close the child care assistance application process and start a waiting list for the first time in our history. This will start effective June 1, 2025. We will continue to authorize child care assistance for temporary assistance families, but new applications and recertifications for working families will likely be closed stemming from insufficient funding. It is imperative for families to apply and complete the eligibility process to be considered for the waitlist. **Please note that only eligible applications or recertifications will be added to the waitlist.**

The County will assess funding availability monthly, and families on the waitlist will be notified when they may reapply. Once funding becomes available, eligible cases will be prioritized according to Federal and State guidelines.

We realize closing the application process will be devastating for both working families and providers. One step a provider can take to help reduce the time we must close applications, is to voluntarily limit the number of absences submitted for payment. We estimate millions could be saved if providers submitted less than 40 per child. This savings would allow us to open and pay for active child care assistance cases.

To dispel any misconception, it should be noted that all child care assistance funds the county receives from the federal and state governments must be spent on childcare. The county does not "keep" any of these funds if they are not spent.

The Department of Social Services- Economic Security understands that this situation may create challenges for our community's families and providers. We are committed to supporting you during this transition and will keep you updated on any developments. If you have questions, please contact our child care assistance eligibility staff at 315-435-5683.

Sincerely,

Sarah G. Merrick, Commissioner

5/19/25

Date