

Practitioners in Texas' Child Care Subsidy Program Describe How Policy Implementation Impacts Hispanic Families' Receipt of Subsidies

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Introduction

This brief, part of a multi-state study of access to Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies for Hispanic^a families,^{1,2} considers Latino families' experiences as they seek child care subsidies. The brief draws on the perspectives of local subsidy program staff in Texas—a state in which Latinos make up nearly half the child population (49%)³ and where the Hispanic population has grown more than 75 percent since 2000.⁴ Nearly one third (29%) of Hispanic children in Texas live below the poverty line and they comprise roughly two thirds of the state's children who are eligible to receive CCDF funds.⁵ Yet Hispanic children make up less than half of child care subsidy recipients in Texas,⁵ mirroring the national pattern of Latinos being underserved by this program.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is the state lead agency administering CCDF. Implementation occurs through 28 regional Workforce Development Boards, with services delivered by local Workforce Solutions Offices. Although baseline CCDF policies are set at the state level by the TWC and align with federal regulations, regional Workforce Development Boards and local offices have some discretion on collecting application documents, determining family eligibility, maintaining waiting lists, and engaging in community outreach and communication with applicants.⁶

To identify possible program-related barriers to and facilitators of subsidy access for Latino families in Texas, we surveyed 235 local child care subsidy staff about their implementation practices and experiences, with a focus on their engagement with Hispanic families. Additional details about the study design and methods are provided below, along with descriptive information about the CCDF frontline caseworkers and supervisors who responded to this survey. Local program staff provided insights about subsidy implementation practices that may challenge or facilitate Hispanic families' access to affordable child care. These findings can inform ongoing policy efforts—at the state, territory, Tribal, and federal levels—to reduce administrative burdens and support equity, efficiency, and efficacy of government service delivery.

Key Findings

Our findings document the perceptions and experiences of local subsidy program staff who implement the child care subsidy program in Texas, pointing to areas of administrative burden that may help explain disproportionately lower rates of subsidy receipt among Latino children in Texas. Subsidy program staff voices also provided insights on the resources and strategies sometimes used to engage Hispanic families and help them learn about, apply for, and receive subsidy benefits.

Staff perspectives on child care subsidy eligibility and the application process

Local child care subsidy program staff were generally in alignment on their perceptions of eligibility criteria and the application process, and consistent with how Texas state policy describes eligibility and application requirements. Staff varied, however, in the types of documentation they typically collect from families and their ideas about the challenges these expectations present for some applicants.

^a We use "Hispanic," "Latino," "Latinx," and "Latine" interchangeably throughout the brief. The terms are used to reflect the U.S. Census definition to include individuals having origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, as well as other "Hispanic, Latino or Spanish" origins.

- According to staff—and consistent with state policy—families can qualify for subsidies for a variety of parent- and child-focused reasons, with employment, job search, and involvement with child protective services cited as the most common qualifying activities among the families they served.
- Most staff agreed that documents to verify household income, employment, and child citizenship are required, which aligns with Texas state policy. However, there was less consensus about whether families are required to provide a valid driver's license or state ID and Social Security numbers.
- Approximately half of staff felt that verification of income, work hours, and child birth certificates were challenging for both Hispanic families and other applicants.

Staff perspectives and capacity-related issues around language accessibility of services

Many local subsidy program staff in Texas reported having Latine heritage and Spanish language skills, which indicates potential capacity to provide culturally and linguistically responsive services to Spanish-speaking Hispanic applicants. At the same time, staff reported that few supports are available to Latino families that primarily speak languages indigenous to Latin America, which could constrain engagement with these families.

- Approximately half of staff self-identified as Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx, and about one in three reported they were a native or fluent Spanish speaker.
- About two thirds of staff reported that Spanish translation or interpreter services over the phone were “very accessible” for families, and roughly half perceived online materials and in-person supports to be “very accessible” for Spanish-speaking families.
- In contrast, few staff felt that translation or interpreter services over the phone were accessible in languages indigenous to Latin America, and even fewer felt that other online and in-person resources were accessible in Indigenous languages.
- While roughly one third of staff reported feeling “very prepared” to help Spanish-speaking families, others reported feeling prepared to a lesser extent. Additionally, two thirds said they were “not at all prepared” to support families who speak languages indigenous to Latin America.

About This Series and Brief

This brief is part of a [research series](#) on Latino families' access to social welfare assistance; the series examines—from different vantage points—how government programs offering benefits to income-eligible families are structured and implemented in ways that shape families' access and uptake. Here, we use findings from a survey of Texas child care subsidy program staff conducted in 2023 as part of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families' Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities. This study seeks to inform federal and state efforts to reduce administrative burden on families and improve the efficiency, equity, and efficacy of service delivery—especially among Latino families.

Previous work on administrative burden, including [our own analysis](#), suggests that program-related learning, psychological, and compliance costs limit the reach of public benefits like CCDF because they prevent eligible families from participating. Learning costs occur when individuals are unaware of a resource or how to apply for it. Psychological and compliance costs arise from aspects of the process that create negative experiences for applicants or make it too challenging to navigate. Recognizing that such costs limit access and potentially exacerbate inequities, the [2021 White House Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government](#) directed governmental agencies to assess and improve the customer experience and reduce access barriers to public services, especially for individuals and communities who have been historically underserved.

Local staff tasked with administering public benefit programs play a key role in this process as the primary and potentially sole point of contact for families seeking assistance. Research on [local program staff perceptions, knowledge and practices](#) has begun to explore the [administrative burdens that Latino families with low incomes may encounter when applying to programs](#) like CCDF, [including language barriers, challenges providing required documentation, and lack of time or experience navigating agency procedures](#).

Staff perspectives on outreach to Latino communities

Local subsidy program staff in Texas also reported on their agency's outreach efforts. Staff responding to our survey shared that relationship-based methods were commonly used to connect Latine communities with child care subsidies and other social services.

- Staff felt that Hispanic families most often learned about the subsidy program through relationship-based methods, including word of mouth, in-person outreach, and direct referrals from child care providers, social service organizations, and community organizations.
- About half of responding staff said their agency participated in targeted outreach to Latinx communities, although roughly the same proportion were unsure about whether community contacts made these connections.

Recommendations for reducing subsidy access barriers

The findings from this study point to several steps that CCDF administering agencies could take to reduce access barriers for Latine families eligible to receive subsidized child care:

- Allow for greater flexibility around employment and income verification to be more responsive to the realities of many parents' work conditions (e.g., irregular or seasonal schedules, multiple jobs, and undocumented pay), especially for the many Hispanic parents that work these types of jobs.
- Provide guidance and training for subsidy program staff to align and clarify procedures for collecting application documents, with a goal of minimizing burden for families and staff.
- Develop a social service workforce with cultural and linguistic capacity to engage with Latino families.

Context

Latino children and families in Texas

Texas is the largest state in the nation in terms of geographic area and is home to the second largest population of Hispanic children (3.65 million). Additionally, [recent Census estimates](#) from 2022 show that Hispanic children make up the largest racial and ethnic group in the state (49% of all children). A key aspect of the collective identity of Texas's Latino population is the [border and history the state shares with Mexico](#), a country from which the majority of Hispanic individuals claim heritage. However, there are also many Hispanic individuals in Texas who identify as having [Salvadoran, Puerto Rican, Honduran, and Guatemalan heritage](#). Additionally, there is a presence of [Tejanos \(4%\)](#), or descendants of Spaniards and Native Americans.

Approximately [30 percent](#) of parents of young children in Texas are immigrants, with Latino families making up [70 percent](#) of the immigrant population. Additionally, [over half](#) of immigrant parents of young children in Texas have limited English proficiency, and [80 percent of young Hispanic children](#) are considered dual language learners (DLLs). There is also a rich history of populations in Texas who speak an [Indigenous language from Latin America](#) and do not speak Spanish. Although it is challenging to know the prevalence of [Indigenous language-speaking Latino families](#), [national estimates](#) suggest this is a large and diverse population that continues to grow as many immigrants entering the United States reside in Texas.

Texas CCDF policy context

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), which oversees and delivers workforce development services to families in Texas—is the state's lead CCDF agency. The [subsidized child care program](#) is implemented through 28 regional Workforce Development Boards (across 254 counties) and funding is dispersed at the local level through over 170 Workforce Solutions Offices and their contracted service providers. The main pathway by which families access CCDF funds is by applying for subsidy vouchers in Workforce Solutions Offices. However, some Workforce Development Boards also have contracted agreements with local education agencies and programs to deliver CCDF funds through subsidized enrollment slots.

Although many aspects of CCDF policy requirements are set at the state level (TWC), Workforce Development Board regions have independent authority to manage and process local subsidy applications and eligibility determinations. TWC sets general baseline requirements for eligibility criteria, priority groups for child care services, provider eligibility, and reimbursement rates. Across the regional Workforce Development Boards, local Workforce Solutions offices have the discretion to set more specific [requirements and procedures](#) around collecting application documents, identifying other prioritized populations, setting family copayment amounts, maintaining waiting lists, and determining provider reimbursement rates.

There were [90,000 children](#) ages 6 and under who received child care subsidies in Texas in 2022, which is a small share of the total population of households with low incomes who are eligible for CCDF. While approximately [30 percent](#) of children under age 6 are eligible to receive CCDF subsidies in Texas, only [14 percent](#) of those eligible were served given limited funds. There is limited information on the proportion of eligible Hispanic children receiving subsidies in the state, but overall estimates suggest that CCDF funds are insufficient in meeting the needs of families with low incomes.

Staff Perspectives on Child Care Subsidy Eligibility and the Application Process

Qualifying activities for child care subsidy eligibility

At the local level, subsidy program staff may further shape families' access to child care subsidies, depending on staff's understanding and interpretation of state policy. The types of parent-guardian activities or family circumstances that can qualify a family for subsidized child care is a state-level policy decision made by the TWC that has implications for subsidy access. In most states, there are multiple pathways by which families can connect to the CCDF subsidy program, either based on parent activities that support family well-being—such as employment, training, or job searching—or for more child-focused reasons to support children experiencing challenging circumstances, such as involvement with protective services.^b In Texas, the activities listed in Figure 1 are considered policy-approved qualifying activities.^{c,6}

In our survey, local subsidy program staff reported on the activities they considered approved for subsidized care, which activities are the most common for the applicants they serve, and whether any were relatively more common for Hispanic compared to non-Hispanic families. These data, shown in Figure 1, indicate that a variety of both parent- and child-focused circumstances commonly qualify Texan families for child care assistance.

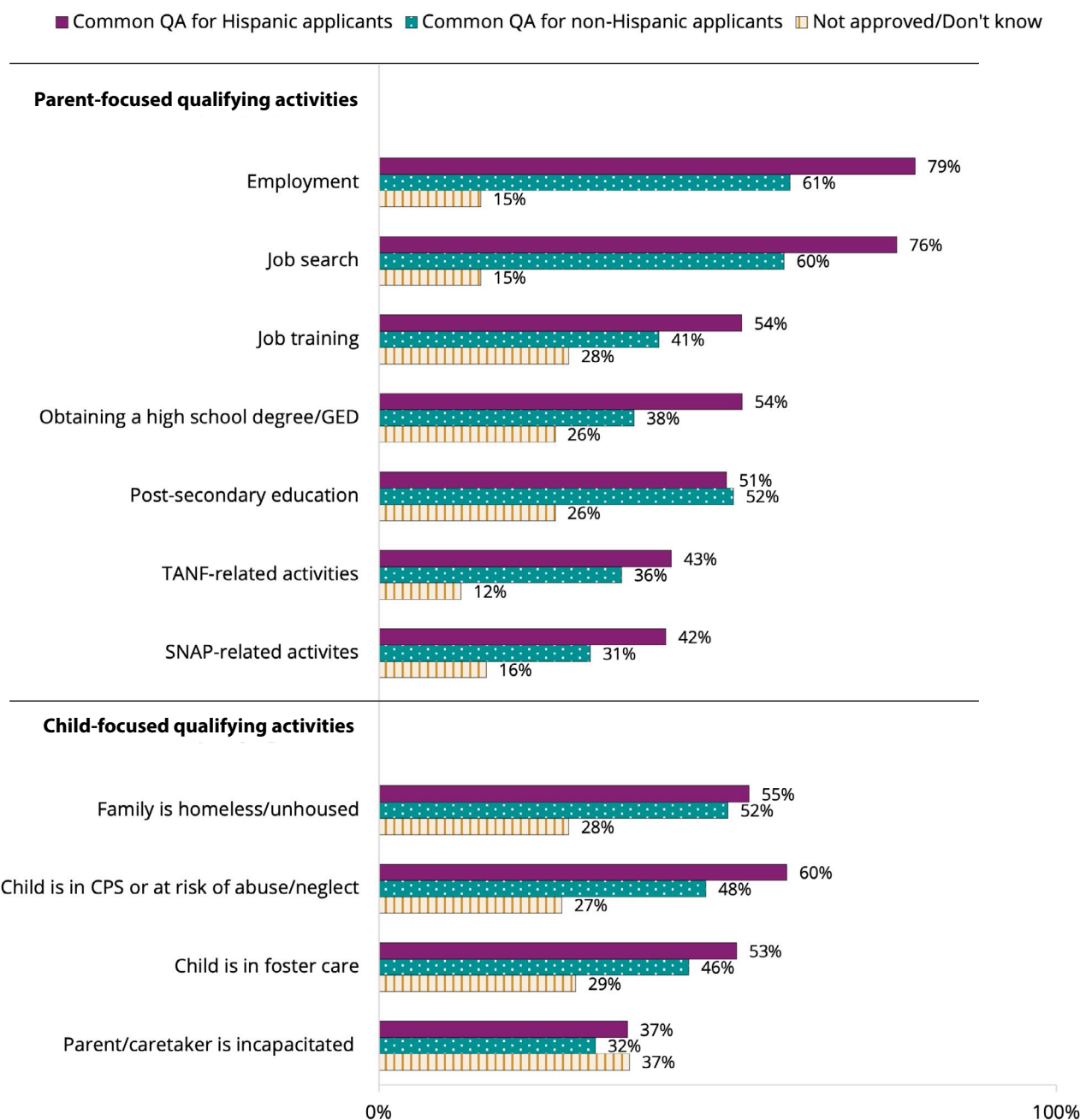
- Generally, staff responses were fairly aligned regarding the activities that qualify families for child care subsidies. However, for activities beyond employment and job search—for example, activities related to other social service programs (i.e., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)—roughly one quarter to one third of staff reported being unsure of whether they were approved qualifying activities for CCDF.
- According to staff, subsidies were most commonly granted to support employment, job search/training, families considered to be homeless or unhoused, and children involved with child protective services.
- Of the range of qualifying activities approved by the state, the most common activities among Hispanic applicants were employment, job search, and obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent degree.

^b As a conceptual framing, we organized qualifying activities by whether they are parent-focused versus child-focused; however, readers should note that these are not official designations.

^c English as a Second Language classes are an activity that qualifies families for child care subsidies in some states, but TWC does not explicitly state this is an eligible activity in their CCDF plan or policy guidance manual. English proficiency classes as part of job training are an approved activity that qualifies families for subsidies in TX, but we did not ask about this on our survey.

Figure 1. According to subsidy program staff, employment and work-related activities were the most common activities qualifying families for subsidies, including Hispanic applicants.

Percentage of staff who reported that each parent- and child-focused activity qualifies families for subsidies, and staff perceptions of how common these activities are among Hispanic and non-Hispanic applicants, 2023



Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

Notes: Sample sizes for responses to these items ranged from 188 - 206.

Documents collected as part of the application process

As part of the application and eligibility determination process, local subsidy program staff in Texas local Workforce Solutions Offices and contracted agencies collect various documents from families—some of which are required by the state and others that are at the discretion of the regional Workforce Development Board, local agency, or individual staff member.⁷ These documentation requirements can be either more burdensome or relatively streamlined, depending

on how challenging it is for families to gather and submit documentation.¹ The results from our survey revealed a fair amount of agreement among local subsidy program staff about the information they collect during the application process, with less consensus around specific types of documentation that verify certain aspects of eligibility. For example, most staff (97%) agreed that applicants are required to provide a current address as proof of residency, while half (52%) indicated that driver's licenses were a required document despite not being required by the state.

Types of documentation collected from families

- Table 1 shows that, consistent with state policy, local subsidy program staff in Texas generally agreed that families are required to provide documentation related to income, work hour verification, household address and membership, parent/guardian relationship to child, citizenship status, and child birth certificates.
- Alternatively, many staff reported that they do not collect documentation around household assets or adult birth certificates. Although these documents are not required at the state level, local Workforce Solutions Offices staff do have discretion to request them.
- There was less agreement among staff about whether applicants are required to provide a valid driver's license/state ID and Social Security number. Neither of these are required by the state, but local Workforce Solutions Offices have discretion in whether they request these documents.

Table 1. Documents collected during the application process according to local subsidy program staff, and whether documents are required by state policy, 2023

Document Type	Required	Requested, Not Required	Not Collected	Don't Know	Required by state policy? ⁷
Eligibility					
Income verification	91.0%	<1%	6.0%	2.5%	Y
Work-hour verification	87.6%	3.0%	6.4%	3.0%	Y
Documentation of assets	24.2%	7.4%	56.8%	11.6%	No*
Household composition and personal information					
Address/residency	96.5%	0%	1.5%	2.0%	Y
Household membership	85.9%	3.0%	7.0%	4.0%	Y
Relationship to child	95.0%	1.0%	2.0%	2.0%	Y
Citizenship status ¹	79.8%	4.6%	9.6%	6.1%	Y
Social Security number ¹	31.4%	49.5%	12.9%	6.2%	No*
Driver's license/State ID	52.1%	18.6%	23.2%	6.2%	No*
Birth certificate – child	78.8%	11.1%	6.6%	3.5%	No*
Birth certificate – adult	15.1%	18.8%	57.0%	9.1%	No*

Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

Notes: Sample sizes for responses to these items ranged from 186 - 202. ¹Survey question did not specify for which household members information was collected. *Indicates document may be collected according to state CCDF plan, but requirements vary by Workforce Board.

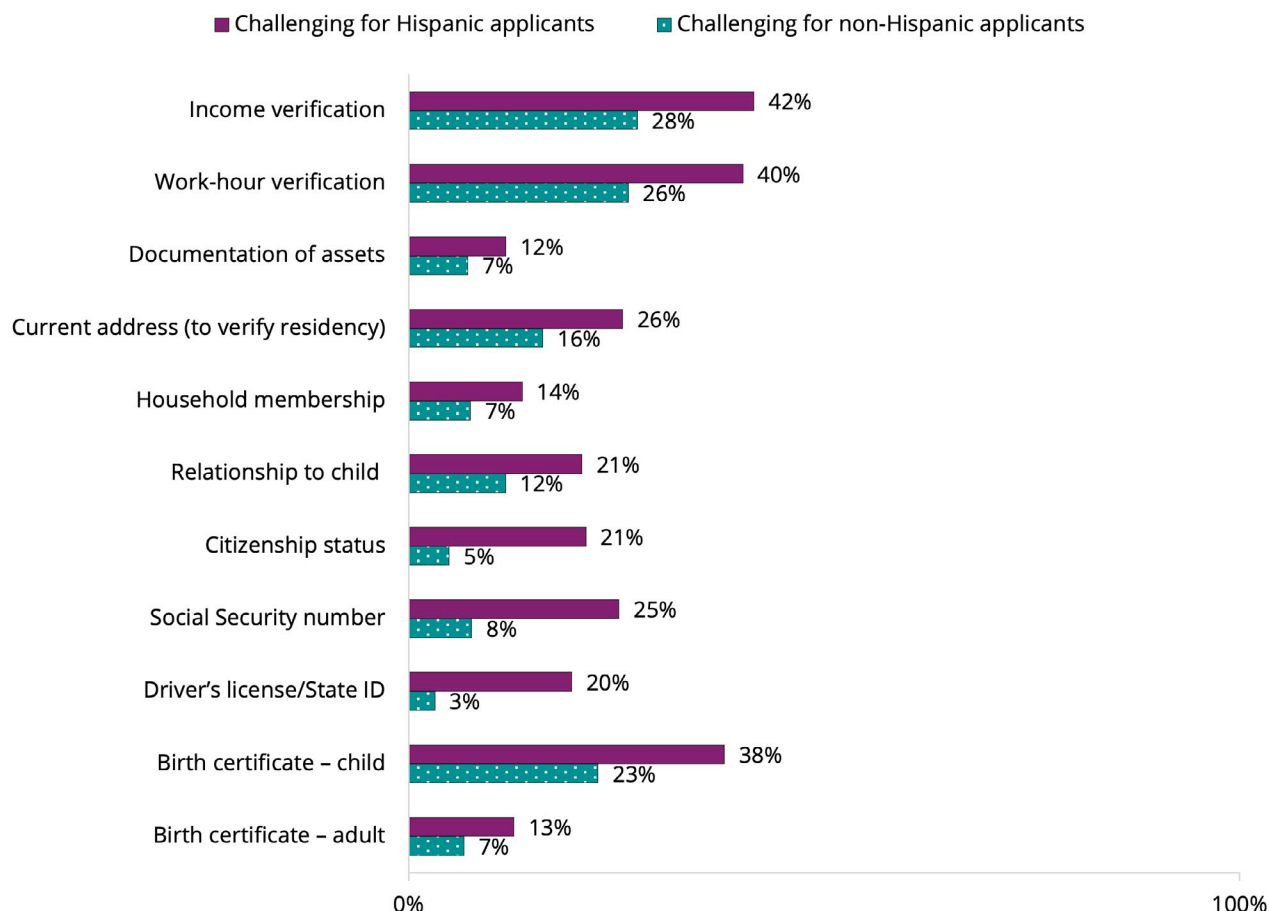
Staff reports of documentation challenges

Subsidy program staff in Texas also responded to a set of survey items asking about what application documents were challenging (or not challenging) for families to provide. They also indicated whether certain documents were more challenging among all families, Hispanic applicants, and non-Hispanic applicants.

- Many local child care subsidy staff did not perceive general challenges for families in providing documents during the application and eligibility process, although this perception varied across different types of documentation (Figure 2).
- The documents that staff most frequently reported as being difficult for families to provide were related to income, work-hour verification, and child birth certificates; some staff noted these requirements were particularly challenging for Latinx applicants. Citizenship documents, Social Security numbers, and driver's license/state ID were also reported as relatively more challenging for Hispanic than for non-Hispanic applicants.

Figure 2. Many subsidy program staff reported that income and work-hour verification and child birth certificates are challenging for families to provide, especially for Latino families.

Percentage of staff who reported that application documents are challenging to collect, 2023



Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

Notes: Sample sizes for responses to these items ranged from 154 - 178.

Staff perceptions of why documents can be challenging for families to provide

Although some subsidy program staff reported that it was not challenging for families to submit application documents, just over half (54%) reported that at least one document was challenging for their applicants. Additionally, many responding staff (n = 95, or 40% of the observed sample) provided open-ended descriptions to elaborate why they perceived challenges—or had observed any families (Hispanic and non-Hispanic) experiencing challenges—while submitting documents during the subsidy application process.

Staff responses highlighted multiple ways that verification of eligibility requirements can be complicated and burdensome for families because of their work or life circumstances, as well as administrative barriers. For example:

"Hours may not be shown on pay stubs; employers may be unwilling to complete Employment Verification Forms; employers may report to wage verification agencies such as The Work Number, but hour and income verification may not yet be available if newly employed; increasing numbers of parents are becoming self-employed or contracted through driver/delivery businesses and have difficulty providing eligibility documentation."

"Most clients get confused about how many paystubs are needed. At times they do not have pay stubs and our verification form must be completed by management or HR. If mistakes are made on that form, we can't use it. Some employers refuse to complete the document or are slow."

"Employers don't always keep records. Money is needed to pay for or replace documents lost/stolen by accident, crime or in a disaster. Grandparents/others may have parents' consent to act in loco parentis but don't have documentation and/or access to someone who does."

"A lot of families don't have birth certificates of their children or can't find them, so they have to end up paying the health department to get them and sometimes they don't have the money for that. Some families don't have [Social Security] cards or their children's [Social Security] cards."

"There may be multiple families staying within the same household and utility bills may only be associated with another member of the household making it difficult to get proof of residency."

Some staff explicitly mentioned that certain challenges disproportionately impacted Hispanic applicants. For example:

"Most Latino applicants are paid cash and we asked for tax return or a 1099."

"In Loco Parentis, in this marginal area it is common that [Latino] children are left at the care of grandparents or siblings, mostly only with a verbal agreement and no legal document to validate that they are the legal caregiver."

"A big challenge Latino clients face is the lack of language support, few documents are translated and there is no incentive for Spanish-speaker to work here, so the only option is a three-way call with the language line."

Other staff explicitly noted their perception that documentation challenges similarly impacted families from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. For example:

"Documentation is a hit or miss issue. While a large portion of the customer base is Latino of some sort, the only issues with documentation [come] from the nature of their employment or household. Self-employment is a major issue due to poor record keeping, but this is more for everyone rather than specific ethnicity groups."

"Documents are challenging to provide NOT only for Latino families, they are also challenging to provide for all families in general since they are so used to agencies working with the documents they have. I believe we have to be an agency that if parents are requiring services they need to provide documents that are being required to receive services just like all the other parents are submitting."

Staff Perspectives on Communication and Outreach Efforts

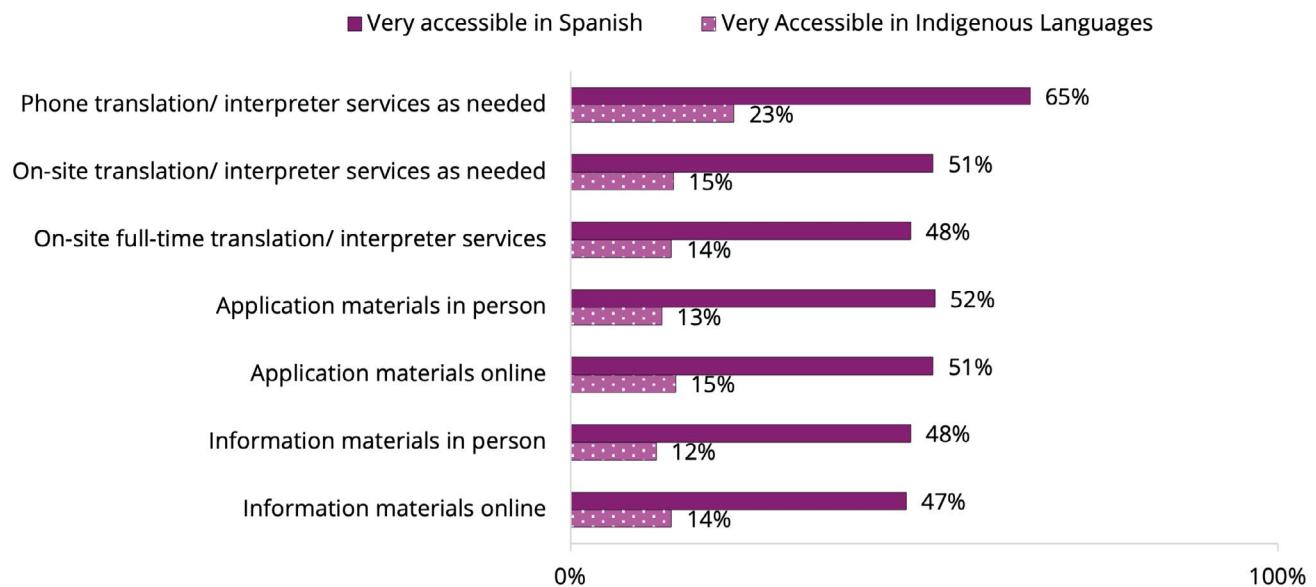
Language accessibility of program information and resources

Anywhere from 20 to 30 percent of Latino children in the United States live in a household with low incomes in which no adults speak English, and instead speak Spanish and/or one of the many Indigenous languages spoken across Latin America.⁸ Given this prevalence, it is important to understand how subsidy staff serve non-English-speaking families. Families with no proficiency in English may experience greater administrative burdens and barriers while trying to access subsidized child care. Providing program information and application materials in other languages and having staff readily available to interpret or translate can represent critical tools to facilitate access. In our survey, subsidy program staff responded to several questions on the degree to which various subsidy resources in Spanish and languages indigenous to Latin America are accessible, on a 5-point scale (1 = *not available even in English*, 5 = *very accessible*).

- Roughly two thirds of local subsidy staff in Texas indicated that phone translation or interpreter services in Spanish were very accessible. Approximately half perceived other online and in-person Spanish language supports and materials to be very accessible.
- Around one quarter of staff felt that phone translation or interpreter services were very accessible for families that speak languages indigenous to Latin America. Somewhat fewer (around 15%) perceived that other types of in-person and online language supports were very accessible in languages indigenous to Latin America.

Figure 3. Over half of subsidy program staff perceived program materials and services as very accessible for Spanish-speaking families, but not as accessible to families that speak a language indigenous to Latin America.

Percentage of staff who reported that program materials and services are very accessible in Spanish and Indigenous Latin American languages, 2023



Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

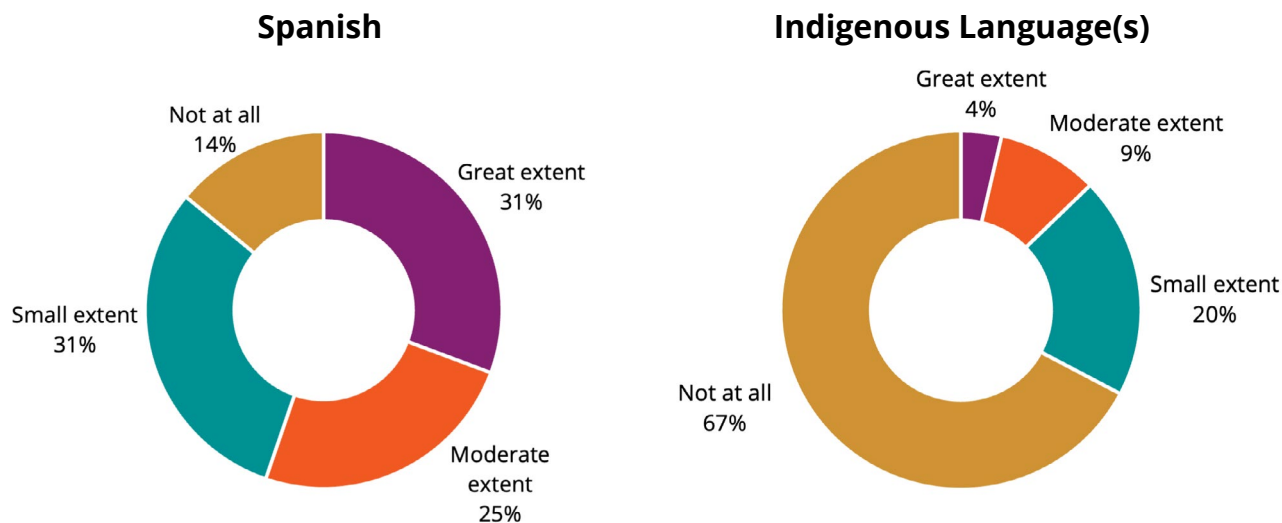
Notes: Sample sizes for responses to these items ranged from 147 - 159.

Based on self-reports of demographic characteristics, many responding subsidy program staff in Texas possess personal capacity to engage and communicate with Latinx families that speak Spanish (see Table 3).

- Half of responding staff self-identified as Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx (51%), with a large share of staff reporting being of Mexican/Chicano heritage (40%).
- Approximately 30 percent of staff described themselves as native or fluent Spanish speakers, which can represent a critical support to Latine families who primarily speak Spanish. Consistent with this, one third of staff reported that they personally communicate in Spanish with families “frequently” or “very frequently,” and the same share felt prepared “to a great extent” to serve Spanish-speaking families (Figure 4).
- In contrast, a small but not insignificant percentage of staff (12%) reported that Latinx families coming to their agency “frequently” or “very frequently” required or requested communications in an Indigenous language. At the same time, no staff in this sample reported being fluent in a language indigenous to Latin America and only 4 percent felt prepared “to a great extent” to serve families who speak these languages. Indeed, the majority of staff (67%) felt “not at all prepared” to do so.

Figure 4. Staff varied in how prepared they felt to help Spanish-speaking families, but few felt prepared to serve families who speak a language indigenous to Latin America.

Percentage of staff who reported different levels of preparedness to serve families who speak Spanish and families who speak an Indigenous language, 2023



Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

Notes: Items were asked only of frontline staff working directly with families and not of supervisors; sample sizes for responses to these items ranged from 110 - 114.

Common methods by which Latino families learn about and apply for subsidies

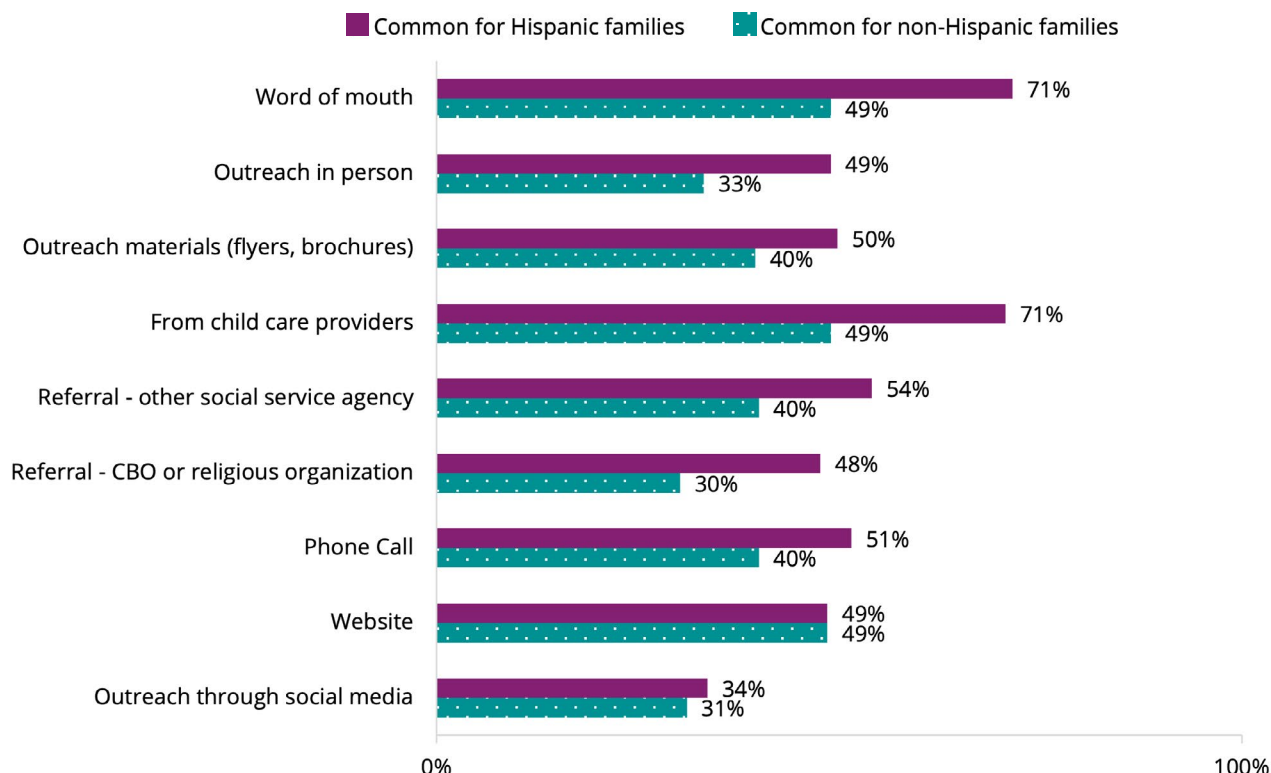
For Hispanic families with low incomes to receive subsidized child care, they must first be aware of the CCDF program, its eligibility criteria, and the application process. To gain insights that can inform agency practices and outreach, we asked staff about what they perceived to be the most common methods by which Hispanic and non-Hispanic families learn about the child care subsidy program.

- Local staff reported that relationship-based methods—including word of mouth, phone calls, in-person outreach, and referrals from social services agencies, community-based organizations, and child care providers—were more common among Hispanic than among non-Hispanic families.
- Alternatively, staff indicated that technology-based methods for learning about child care subsidies, such as websites and social media, were relatively more common for non-Hispanic than Hispanic families.



Figure 5. Relationship-based methods are important ways by which Latine families learn about child care subsidies.

Subsidy staff reports of common ways by which families learn about subsidized child care, 2023



Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

Notes: Categories are not mutually exclusive; staff were asked to identify all methods they perceived to be commonly used by families. Sample size for responses to these items was 235.

Staff outreach efforts

In addition to the multiple pathways by which families learn about the child care subsidy program, agencies can engage in more targeted outreach efforts to reach Latine communities. We asked subsidy program staff from Texas about some of their efforts to connect with Latine families and the frequency with which their agency engaged in these activities (Table 2).

- Just under half of staff (42%) reported that their agency engages in targeted outreach efforts toward Hispanic families.
- However, few staff (17%) reported that their agency frequently uses community contacts to connect with Latinx communities, and many were unaware of whether their agency uses this recruitment method (48%).
- A portion of staff also reported that their agency partners with other organizations that help refer Latino families to the subsidy program (29%) and other social services (33%).
- One in 10 local staff reported that their agency has a dedicated person to work with families on immigration-related issues.

Table 2. Subsidy staff reports of local agency outreach efforts and resources

Agency engages in targeted outreach to Latino families	42.0%
How often does agency use community contacts to connect with/recruit Latine families?	
Very frequently/frequently	17.0%
Somewhat frequently	11.9%
Not very frequently	11.4%
Not at all	11.4%
Don't know	48.3%
Agency partners with other orgs. that help refer Latino families to <i>subsidy</i> services	29.1%
Agency partners with other orgs. that help refer Latino families to <i>other</i> services	32.6%
Agency has dedicated staff to work with families on immigration-related issues	10.9%

Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

Notes: Sample sizes for responses to these items ranged from 150 - 176.

Conclusion and Recommendations

State-level variation around child care subsidy eligibility and application policies—and variation in associated administrative burdens—have implications for families' access to benefits,⁹ with possible differential impacts across families and communities. Research has suggested state CCDF policy choices and local practices in implementing those policies as contributing factors for why eligible Hispanic children are underserved by the subsidy program relative to other children in many states.¹⁰ Emerging research on the role of local subsidy program staff who administer subsidies within communities helps deepen our understanding of how implementation practices may facilitate access or exacerbate existing barriers and inequities.¹¹

The Texas-focused findings reported in this brief come from a larger multi-state study aimed at understanding how CCDF is structured and implemented [on the ground](#) in ways that may shape Hispanic families' access to affordable child care. Indeed, the survey responses from subsidy staff in Texas revealed several insights into access barriers faced by some Latine families seeking assistance, as well as ways these families could be more equitably served by the CCDF program.

Staff-reported perceptions about the child care subsidy eligibility and application process highlighted several areas that could be addressed to reduce the complexity of submitting documents. First, policies around income and employment verification could be modified to be more flexible and better aligned with many Latino (and other) workers' jobs, which may include irregular/seasonal schedules, multiple jobs, and undocumented pay. An additional way to improve access would be to provide local Workforce Solutions Offices with guidance and trainings to align staff practices across regions of the state and clarify the various types of acceptable documents to verify aspects of the subsidy application. Although our analysis did not aim to compare staff procedures across regions of Texas, results suggested considerable variation in the documentation collected from families, which may be partially explained by the discretion that local-level subsidy agencies have in determining what specific documents are acceptable to verify families' income, eligibility, and household characteristics. Greater alignment in procedures across local offices and less strict documentation requirements could reduce burdens for families and staff.

For efforts to reduce administrative burdens and facilitate access to be effective, CCDF consumer education and application materials should be provided in the languages that families speak. Although a large share of subsidy workers in Texas who responded to this survey reported Spanish language skills, staff varied in the extent to which they felt prepared to support Hispanic families who primarily speak Spanish, suggesting the need for additional language supports. Additionally, our results also highlight the need to improve service delivery and provide resources for Hispanic families who speak languages indigenous to Latin America.

The findings shared in this brief lead to several important directions for future research. One key area is the need for further investigation of how local-level variation in CCDF implementation relates to program uptake among Latino families, with consideration for differences across community demographics and ECE supply characteristics. Further work is also needed to better understand how Hispanic families with limited English proficiency experience the language resources and supports described by staff. Additionally, in Texas, English as a Second Language classes are not explicitly stated as an activity that qualifies families for child care subsidies, although guidance from the TWC states that English proficiency programs are acceptable as part of a job training program.⁶ We recommend more clear and explicit mention of English as a Second Language classes as an approved qualifying job training activity in state policy manuals and in guidance for families to improve access for this population, many of whom are Hispanic. Continued research on how state policies are implemented in practice within local communities—and to improve how policies and practices are perceived and experienced by Hispanic families—can yield important insights for local, state, and federal CCDF policy.

Methodology and Study Design

For this multi-state study investigating how state and local CCDF implementation may have implications for Hispanic families' access to child care subsidies, the research team developed an online survey for local-level subsidy program staff who administer CCDF. For each participating state, we tailored the survey to reflect the state context based on conversations with the state lead CCDF agency. In Texas, state-level CCDF administrators at the Texas Workforce Commission Child Care and Early Learning Division provided input and facilitated distribution of the survey to Workforce Board frontline caseworkers and administrative subsidy program staff. Responding staff completed the [survey](#) via a hyperlink to the [REDCap platform](#), an electronic data collection tool. The survey was available from April to July 2023.

Through a series of closed- and open-ended survey items, subsidy program staff responded to questions about their practices and experiences helping families apply for child care subsidies, as well as their perceptions on aspects of CCDF policy implementation that have particular implications for Hispanic families' access. Survey respondents answered largely the same set of survey questions, with a few subsets of items asked only of frontline staff (i.e., caseload characteristics) and administrative staff (i.e., agency operations). The survey contained multiple sections, including (1) staff and agency characteristics, (2) the subsidy eligibility and application process, (3) outreach to Hispanic communities, (4) language accessibility, (5) impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on CCDF services, (6) perceived barriers to subsidized child care, and (7) recommendations for improving services.

Sample and recruitment. In Texas, child care subsidies are administered by the TX Workforce Commission through local Workforce Solutions Offices and separate child care services offices across the 28 Local Workforce Board Regions. Lead child care contacts in each of the Workforce Board Regions were sent study information directly by the researchers and asked to forward the survey to local Workforce Solutions Offices and other agencies that administer the CCDF child care subsidy program. A total of 235 subsidy program staff in 27 (out of 28) Workforce Board Regions participated in the survey. Descriptive information about the staff who participated in the study is reported in Table A.

There are some limitations of note in the context of this study's findings. The strategy used to recruit subsidy staff in Texas—sending the study information to lead child care contacts in each Workforce Board region—resulted in a convenience sample of CCDF caseworkers and administrators who were forwarded the invitation to participate. Additionally, although we received surveys from nearly all Workforce Board regions across the state, it is difficult to know the size of the workforce that works with families and administers CCDF. Additionally, the decentralized nature of CCDF implementation in Texas through local-level Workforce Solutions Offices and other contracted agencies is another limitation that makes it difficult to know the extent to which our results are driven by regional variation in staff perceptions of families' experiences, or from differences in staff procedures across Workforce Boards.

Table A. Characteristics of Local Texas Child Care Subsidy Staff (N = 235)

	Overall N = 235	Frontline staff ¹ 66.1% n = 157	Supervisors 33.6% n = 78
Agency type²			
Local Workforce Solutions Office	76.6%	80.9%	68.4%
Separate child care services office	27.2%	23.6%	34.2%
Other	<1%	0%	2.5%
Years of experience			
<1 year	18.3%	24.2%	6.3%
1-3 years	28.9%	33.8%	20.3%
4-6 years	12.3%	9.6%	17.7%
7-10 years	11.1%	11.5%	10.1%
>10 years	29.4%	21.0%	45.6%
Staff racial/ethnic identity²			
Hispanic	50.6%	53.5%	45.6%
Mexican/Chicano heritage ³	40.0%	44.6%	31.7%
Black	14.0%	12.7%	16.5%
White	33.2%	30.6%	38.0%
Other	2.1%	3.2%	0%
Spanish language skills			
Native speaker	19.7%	22.5%	13.4%
Fluent non-native speaker	10.1%	9.2%	11.9%
Somewhat fluent speaker	12.5%	12.7%	11.9%
Minimal speaking skills	21.2%	21.8%	20.9%
Does not speak Spanish	36.5%	33.8%	41.8%
Staff engagement with Latino communities			
Percent of caseload that is Latine ⁴ (n = 91)	-	53.7% (28.9)	-
Communicates with families in Spanish frequently/very frequently in work role (n = 112)	-	33.9%	-
Agency served migrant farmworkers (n = 159)	37.7%	39.6%	33.3%

Source: Source: Data come from the Summer 2023 Texas Survey of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families Multi-State Study of CCDF Implementation in Local Communities project.

Notes: ¹Frontline staff includes caseworkers (n = 110) and staff who perform a combination of both frontline and administrative roles (n = 47).

²Categories are not mutually exclusive. ³Respondents were able to select more than one category to describe their heritage. While Mexican/Chicano was the most prevalent heritage group, additional countries of heritage identified by staff included Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Costa Rica. ⁴Item was asked only of frontline staff working directly with families and not of supervisors.

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The National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families (Center) is a hub of research to help programs and policy better serve low-income Hispanics across three priority areas: poverty reduction and economic self-sufficiency, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, and early care and education. The Center is led by Child Trends, in partnership with Duke University, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and University of Maryland, College Park. This publication is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of two financial assistance awards (Award # 90PH0028, from 2018-2023, and Award # 90PH0032 from 2023-2028) totaling \$13.5 million across the two awards with 99 percentage funded by ACF/HHS and 1 percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the ACF website, [Administrative and National Policy Requirements](#).

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