

Saint Paul Early Childhood Initiative: Q&A from May 8, 2024 Community of Care Presentation

Q: Please clarify the number of children below the poverty line currently in need of care on slide 11 - was that 5,267?

A: This number is the population in need of care, assuming an uptake rate of 65% and subtracting children whose cost of care is already fully funded.

Q: What are the assumptions behind the ongoing state funding for Early Learning Scholarships and Child Care Assistance Program?

A: We assume funding is held constant at SFY24 funding level, although there are plans to expand some state funding, so if it does expand then the cost of care for child would shrink because this funding would be layered on top of ELS and CCAP, so the program may be able to serve more children.

Q: Will the program have similar requirements as Child Care Assistance for parents, such as working a certain number of hours weekly to be eligible?

A: No, just that they live in St. Paul, their children are between 0 and 5, and be under 185% of poverty (more inclusive than Child Care Assistance).

Q: What are all the risk factors that give children priority for this program (is it like Scholarships in that way)?

A: Those "priority groups" from the Early Learning Scholarship Program are not part of this report. The implementation team should look again to make sure the right/highest need children are prioritized.

Q: Does the child care provider need to be in the City of Saint Paul?

A: Yes, according to these assumptions.

Q: Is providing thus funding to support family home visitors--prenatal to 5-- being considered?

A: No, this study only includes childcare providers.

Q: Are we anticipating a shortage of providers?

A: There is a shortage of providers, and this initiative alone won't solve it. There are new state-level initiatives that seek to grow and stabilize the new providers pool, and the influx of resources for care may also impact it, but it will need to be monitored over time.

Q: What protections are in place to ensure the funding will go to residents in St. Paul?

A: Programs need to find the right balance of compliance vs. accessibility. Some consider a 6-month or yearly reauthorization and review of information on residency, but that's expensive and penalizes those in need. Can also use affidavit process, like in some other programs, to recognize some communities are highly mobile and don't have

the required typical residency documentation. Don't want to spend more on the fraud prevention than the fraud itself costs. In the example of CollegeBound Saint Paul, there is some experience with this – the City has to determine residency. Since the funds come from Saint Paul residents, we seek to be sure the funds support St. Paul residents.

Q: Do the funds go directly to the provider or to the parent?

A: The typical model is to directly fund the provider on behalf of the family to ensure the funds are being used for the intended purpose and helps with tax liability for the family.

Q: Does it follow the child and is it paid weekly or monthly?

A: Programs have done this in a couple of different ways. Weekly is administratively heavy. A monthly model optimizes this. We started with quarterly payments in Colorado but that didn't suit the providers, who need more regular cash flow.

Q: How is attendance managed or when a parent wants to change providers?

A: Providers are a fixed cost, whoever manages the program needs to make these policy decisions. In some places, providers can update enrollments thru portal. Depends on how sharp you want to fine tune your policy.

Q: What are the next steps?

A: The report has gone to the City – they have hired an analyst to work on developing a detailed program plan, with the hope that it can go to the City Council for approval by September, to give voters full info before the November ballot initiative.