

Dept. of Health and Human Services

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of children served. Training shall include, but is not limited to, those requirements described in § 98.41, and all aspects of the State, Territory, or Tribe's licensure requirements;

(2) Require inspections of child care providers and facilities, performed by licensing inspectors (or qualified inspectors designated by the Lead Agency), as specified below:

(i) For licensed child care providers and facilities,

(A) Not less than one pre-licensure inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards, and

(B) Not less than annually, an unannounced inspection for compliance with all child care licensing standards, which shall include an inspection for compliance with health and safety, (including, but not limited to, those requirements described in § 98.41) and fire standards (inspectors may inspect for compliance with all three standards at the same time); and

(ii) For license-exempt child care providers and facilities that are eligible to provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this part, an annual inspection for compliance with health and safety (including, but not limited to, those requirements described in § 98.41), and fire standards;

(iii) Coordinate, to the extent practicable, monitoring efforts with other Federal, State, and local agencies that conduct similar inspections.

(iv) The Lead Agency may, at its option:

(A) Use differential monitoring or a risk-based approach to design annual inspections, provided that the contents covered during each monitoring visit is representative of the full complement of health and safety requirements;

(B) Develop alternate monitoring requirements for care provided in the child's home that are appropriate to the setting; and

(3) Ensure the ratio of licensing inspectors to such child care providers and facilities is maintained at a level sufficient to enable the State, Territory, or Tribe to conduct effective inspections on a timely basis in accordance with the applicable Federal, State, Territory, Tribal, and local law;

(4) Require child care providers to report to a designated State, Territorial, or Tribal entity any serious injuries or deaths of children occurring in child care.

(c) For the purposes of this section and § 98.41, Lead Agencies may exclude grandparents, great grandparents, siblings (if such providers live in a separate residence), aunts, or uncles, from the term "child care providers." If the Lead Agency chooses to exclude these providers, the Lead Agency shall provide a description and justification in the CCDF Plan, pursuant to § 98.16(l), of requirements, if any, that apply to these providers.

[81 FR 67583, Sept. 30, 2016]

§ 98.43 Criminal background checks.

(a)(1) States, Territories, and Tribes, through coordination of the Lead agency with other State, territorial, and tribal agencies, shall have in effect:

(i) Requirements, policies, and procedures to require and conduct background checks, and make a determination of eligibility for child care staff members (including prospective child care staff members) of all licensed, regulated, or registered child care providers and all child care providers eligible to deliver services for which assistance is provided under this part as described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section;

(ii) Licensing, regulation, and registration requirements, as applicable, that prohibit the employment of child care staff members as described in paragraph (c) of this section; and

(iii) Requirements, policies, and procedures in place to respond as expeditiously as possible to other States', Territories', and Tribes' requests for background check results in order to accommodate the 45 day timeframe required in paragraph (e)(1) of this section.

(2) In this section:

(i) Child care provider means a center based child care provider, a family child care provider, or another provider of child care services for compensation and on a regular basis that:

(A) Is not an individual who is related to all children for whom child care services are provided; and

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(B) Is licensed, regulated, or registered under State law or eligible to receive assistance provided under this subchapter; and

(ii) Child care staff member means an individual (other than an individual who is related to all children for whom child care services are provided):

(A) Who is employed by a child care provider for compensation, including contract employees or self-employed individuals;

(B) Whose activities involve the care or supervision of children for a child care provider or unsupervised access to children who are cared for or supervised by a child care provider; or

(C) Any individual residing in a family child care home who is age 18 and older.

(b) A criminal background check for a child care staff member under paragraph (a) of this section shall include:

(1) A Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check using Next Generation Identification;

(2) A search of the National Crime Information Center's National Sex Offender Registry; and

(3) A search of the following registries, repositories, or databases in the State where the child care staff member resides and each State where such staff member resided during the preceding five years:

(i) State criminal registry or repository, with the use of fingerprints being:

(A) Required in the State where the staff member resides;

(B) Optional in other States;

(ii) State sex offender registry or repository; and

(iii) State-based child abuse and neglect registry and database.

(c)(1) The State, Territory, or Tribe in coordination with the Lead Agency shall find a child care staff member ineligible for employment for services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this part, if such individual:

(i) Refuses to consent to the criminal background check described in paragraph (b) of this section;

(ii) Knowingly makes a materially false statement in connection with such criminal background check;

(iii) Is registered, or is required to be registered, on a State sex offender reg-

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istry or repository or the National Sex Offender Registry; or

(iv) Has been convicted of a felony consisting of:

(A) Murder, as described in section 1111 of title 18, United States Code;

(B) Child abuse or neglect;

(C) A crime against children, including child pornography;

(D) Spousal abuse;

(E) A crime involving rape or sexual assault;

(F) Kidnapping;

(G) Arson;

(H) Physical assault or battery; or

(I) Subject to paragraph (e)(4) of this section, a drug-related offense committed during the preceding 5 years; or

(v) Has been convicted of a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child, including the following crimes: child abuse, child endangerment, and sexual assault, or of any misdemeanor involving child pornography.

(2) A child care provider described in paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section shall be ineligible for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter if the provider employs a staff member who is ineligible for employment under paragraph (c)(1) of this section.

(d)(1) A child care provider covered by paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section shall submit a request, to the appropriate State, Territorial, or Tribal agency, defined clearly on the State or Territory Web site described in paragraph (g) of this section, for a criminal background check described in paragraph (b) of this section, for each child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) of the provider.

(2) Subject to paragraph (d)(3) of this section, the provider shall submit such a request:

(i) Prior to the date an individual becomes a child care staff member of the provider; and

(ii) Not less than once during each 5-year period for any existing staff member.

(3) A child care provider shall not be required to submit a request under paragraph (d)(2) of this section for a child care staff member if:

(i) The staff member received qualifying results from a background check

described in paragraph (b) of this section;

(A) Within 5 years before the latest date on which such a submission may be made; and

(B) While employed by or seeking employment by another child care provider within the State;

(ii) The State provided to the first provider a qualifying background check result, consistent with this subchapter, for the staff member; and

(iii) The staff member is employed by a child care provider within the State, or has been separated from employment from a child care provider within the State for a period of not more than 180 consecutive days.

(4) A prospective staff member may begin work for a child care provider described in paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section after receiving qualifying results for either the check described at paragraph (b)(1) or (b)(3)(i) of this section in the State where the prospective staff member resides. Pending completion of all background check components in paragraph (b) of this section, the staff member must be supervised at all times by an individual who received a qualifying result on a background check described in paragraph (b) of this section within the past five years.

(e) *Background check results.* (1) The State, Territory, or Tribe shall carry out the request of a child care provider for a criminal background check as expeditiously as possible, but not to exceed 45 days after the date on which the provider submitted the request, and shall provide the results of the criminal background check to such provider and to the current or prospective staff member.

(2) States, Territories, and Tribes shall ensure the privacy of background check results by:

(i) Providing the results of the criminal background check to the provider in a statement that indicates whether a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) is eligible or ineligible for employment described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, without revealing any disqualifying crime or other related information regarding the individual.

(ii) If the child care staff member is ineligible for such employment due to

the background check, the State, Territory, or Tribe will, when providing the results of the background check, include information related to each disqualifying crime, in a report to the staff member or prospective staff member, along with information on the opportunity to appeal, described in paragraph (e)(3) of this section.

(iii) No State, Territory, or Tribe shall publicly release or share the results of individual background checks, except States and Tribes may release aggregated data by crime as listed under paragraph (c)(1)(iv) of this section from background check results, as long as such data is not personally identifiable information.

(3) States, Territories, and Tribes shall provide for a process by which a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) may appeal the results of a criminal background check conducted under this section to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such member's criminal background report. The State, Territory, and Tribe shall ensure that:

(i) Each child care staff member is given notice of the opportunity to appeal;

(ii) A child care staff member will receive clear instructions about how to complete the appeals process if the child care staff member wishes to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such member's criminal background report;

(iii) If the staff member files an appeal, the State, Territory, or Tribe will attempt to verify the accuracy of the information challenged by the child care staff member, including making an effort to locate any missing disposition information related to the disqualifying crime;

(iv) The appeals process is completed in a timely manner for each child care staff member; and

(v) Each child care staff member shall receive written notice of the decision. In the case of a negative determination, the decision should indicate the State's efforts to verify the accuracy of information challenged by the child care staff member, as well as any additional appeals rights available to the child care staff member.

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(4) States, Territories, and Tribes may allow for a review process through which the State, Territory, or Tribe may determine that a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) disqualified for a crime specified in paragraph (c)(1)(iv)(I) of this section is eligible for employment described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, notwithstanding paragraph (c)(2) of this section. The review process shall be consistent with title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e *et seq.*);

(5) Nothing in this section shall be construed to create a private right of action if a provider has acted in accordance with this section.

(f) *Fees for background checks.* Fees that a State, Territory, or Tribe may charge for the costs of processing applications and administering a criminal background check as required by this section shall not exceed the actual costs for the processing and administration.

(g) *Transparency.* The State or Territory must ensure that its policies and procedures under this section, including the process by which a child care provider or other State or Territory may submit a background check request, are published in the Web site of the State or Territory as described in § 98.33(a) and the Web site of local lead agencies.

(h) *Disqualification for other crimes.* (1) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent a State, Territory, or Tribe from disqualifying individuals as child care staff members based on their conviction for crimes not specifically listed in paragraph (c)(1) of this section that bear upon the fitness of an individual to provide care for and have responsibility for the safety and well-being of children.

(2) Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter or otherwise affect the rights and remedies provided for child care staff members or prospective staff members residing in a State that disqualifies individuals as child care staff members for crimes not specifically provided for under this section.

[81 FR 67584, Sept. 30, 2016, as amended at 89 FR 15414, Mar. 1, 2024]

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§ 98.44 Training and professional development.

(a) The Lead Agency must describe in the Plan the State or Territory framework for training, professional development, and postsecondary education for caregivers, teachers, and directors, including those working in school-age care, that:

(1) Is developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i))) or similar coordinating body;

(2) May engage training and professional development providers, including higher education in aligning training and education opportunities with the State's framework;

(3) Addresses professional standards and competencies, career pathways, advisory structure, articulation, and workforce information and financing;

(4) Establishes qualifications in accordance with § 98.41(d)(3) designed to enable child care and school-age care providers that provide services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this part to promote the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children and improve the knowledge and skills of caregivers, teachers and directors in working with children and their families;

(5) Includes professional development conducted on an ongoing basis, providing a progression of professional development (which may include encouraging the pursuit of postsecondary education);

(6) Reflects current research and best practices relating to the skills necessary for caregivers, teachers, and directors to meet the developmental needs of participating children and engage families, including culturally and linguistically appropriate practices; and

(7) Improves the quality, diversity, stability, and retention (including financial incentives and compensation improvements) of caregivers, teachers, and directors.

(b) The Lead Agency must describe in the Plan its established requirements for pre-service or orientation (to be completed within three months) and