

Implementation of Child Care Subsidy Eligibility Redetermination Policy in Maryland

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Project Overview

- The goal of the project is to identify factors that affect children's access to child care through the child care subsidy program, specifically focusing on the implementation of policies related to recertifying eligibility and obtaining a voucher to pay for care.
- The project analyzes data from all children who received child care paid through the Maryland child care subsidy program from 2007–2012.

Background: When children have unstable child care, it may harm children's well-being and child cognitive and behavioral outcomes.

- Research has found that many young children experience child care instability through changes in child care settings or use of multiple non-parental care arrangements.

In Maryland, child care subsidies ("vouchers") help low-income families who are working, in job training, or obtaining education pay for child care.

- In Maryland, obtaining subsidized child care requires both establishing **eligibility** and obtaining a **voucher**.
- A voucher is issued for care with the child care provider chosen by the family.
- While state policy allows 12-month eligibility periods, caseworkers have some discretion in assigning redetermination dates (i.e., the length of the eligibility period) and voucher end dates (i.e., the length of the voucher) with a maximum length of 12 months.
- Research in other states has shown that when families have to recertify eligibility, they are more likely to leave the subsidy program. Short eligibility periods may lead to unstable care.

Research Questions: How long are vouchers and eligibility periods for subsidized child care? How do they differ for families in different circumstances and places?

How long are **eligibility periods**?

Eligibility periods have been getting **longer** over the time period studied. But most were shorter than one year, and half were 31 weeks or fewer in 2012.

How long are **vouchers**?

Vouchers range in length from one to 52 weeks, but many are short. In 2012, half of all vouchers were for 13 weeks or fewer.

Vouchers are shorter when...

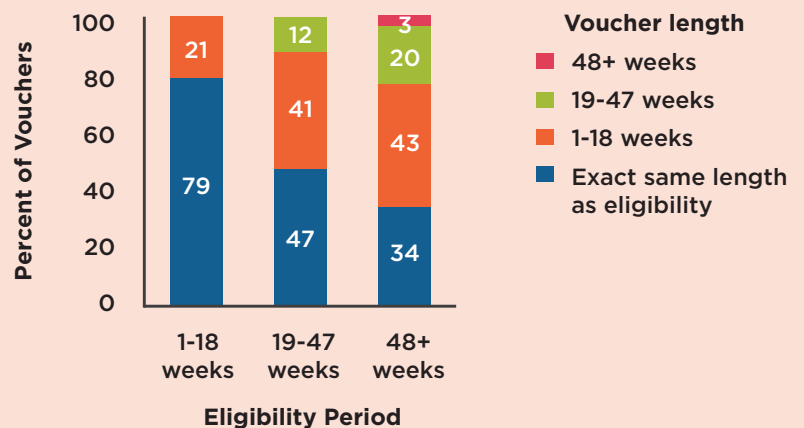
- Families receive Temporary Cash Assistance.
- The voucher starts in the summer.

Vouchers are longer when...

- The voucher is due to employment, rather than training or education.
- The child care is in an informal setting rather than a formal one.

Comparison of **eligibility** and **voucher** lengths

Half of all vouchers are shorter than their associated eligibility period. When the eligibility period is short (<19 weeks), the voucher is usually the same length. Even when the eligibility period is long (48+ weeks), many (43%) of the vouchers are short (<19 weeks).



Conclusion: Despite a 12-month eligibility policy, both eligibility periods and vouchers are shorter than one year for most families. These shorter vouchers and eligibility periods might disrupt some care arrangements that otherwise would continue. While variation in voucher lengths is related in part to family characteristics, variation in local office practices is the primary factor behind differences in eligibility periods. The table below shows the variation in lengths of eligibility periods and vouchers across counties in Maryland. Counties are ordered in the table based on the percentage of eligibility periods that are 48 weeks or longer, with the highest percentage listed first. The percentage of vouchers that are shorter than eligibility period ranges from 12% to 72% across counties.

	Percent of eligibility periods that are long (48+ weeks)	Percent of vouchers shorter than eligibility period	Number of vouchers
Calvert	88	52	3,376
Kent	77	39	1,024
Carroll	73	63	6,939
Howard	70	70	11,009
Washington	68	69	13,848
Allegany	58	19	6,846
Baltimore County	57	72	59,240
Cecil	55	33	4,692
Queen Anne's	51	31	1,723
Wicomico	49	60	11,623
Saint Mary's	42	40	6,670
Somerset	38	48	5,128
Worcester	33	22	2,822
Caroline	26	26	3,479
Baltimore City	26	60	113,265
Anne Arundel	18	24	11,546
Talbot	17	27	2,478
Harford	16	42	17,899
Charles	9	23	9,650
Dorchester	7	33	4,802
Montgomery	5	65	35,925
Prince George's	5	12	46,557
Garrett	1	42	1,760
Frederick	<1	43	10,922
Total	30	51	393,223



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