

## Streamline the Child Care Assistance Program May 2014

The Child Care Assistance program makes child care affordable for working families and is part of the system of high quality early learning for pre-schoolers. The two changes to the program proposed by these bills will improve access for parents, align program rules with other work-support programs and reduce the administrative burden on state staff.

Legislation introduced by Representative Cimini (**H7241**) and Senator Cool Rumsey (**S2499**) would (1) eliminate the asset test for eligibility for subsidized child care and (2) limit the child support cooperation requirement to the child for whom the family is receiving child care assistance.

**Eliminate the asset eligibility test.** Rhode Island is one of only 2 states (Nebraska is the other) that has an asset test for child care assistance.<sup>1</sup> Neither of the other two programs that help working families in Rhode Island, SNAP and RIte Care, have an asset test.

Families applying for child care assistance must verify that they do not have \$10,000 in “liquid assets” (money in the bank, stocks, bonds). Since families with income within the guidelines (less than twice the poverty level), rarely, if ever have assets in excess of the limit, eliminating the asset test will streamline the application process and will not increase eligibility.

**Limit the Child Support Cooperation requirement.** Current law requires a parent to cooperate in pursuing child support from the non-custodial parent of **all** children in the family, not just the child for whom child care assistance is sought. Out of 22 states that impose a child support cooperation requirement, only 2 other states (Minnesota and South Dakota) require this.<sup>2</sup>

Conditioning cooperation with child support for all children creates a barrier to assistance for an eligible child where a sibling has a different father. The parent may

<sup>1</sup> CCDF Policies Database Book of Tables: Key Cross-State Variations in CCDF Policies as of October 1, 2012 (November 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Office of Child Care’s National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance, “CCDF Eligibility and Child Support Enforcement Cooperation Requirements” September 2011.

already have an informal support arrangement with the father and not want to “rock the boat”. If domestic violence is involved, the parent may not want to initiate any type of action.

Other programs that require child support cooperation limit it only to the child for whom assistance is sought and the child care program should be brought into alignment with those programs.