

Commerce Children's Center Association Tuition Assistance Program Description

The Commerce Children's Center Association has a program that offers tuition assistance to help lower income DOC employees with cost of childcare at the Commerce Children's Center (CCC). Limited funds will be awarded to provide assistance to families that could not otherwise afford Center childcare.

Funding

Tuition assistance funds come from the Commerce Children's Center Association (CCCA) Board and individual donations (donations are tax-deductible and interested individuals are encouraged to contribute). The funds available are limited and may vary from year to year. While continued aid is not guaranteed, the Board gives current aid recipients priority so that enrollment is not disrupted.

Eligibility

Federal employees and affiliates are eligible. The following definitions apply to the terminology of families eligible for tuition assistance:

Federal employee: An individual who has an employee-employer relationship with the U.S. Government. Employment must be verified by an administrative officer or other representative of the employing organization.

Affiliate: Affiliates include NIST and NOAA joint institute employees, guest workers, postdoctoral or graduate student researchers, on-site contractors, and other individuals who help advance the U.S. Department of Commerce's (DOC) mission in Boulder. Eligibility requires affiliation through various arrangements, including cooperative agreements and contracts, that are a minimum of one year in duration. Employment must be verified by an administrative officer or other representative of the employing organization.

Contributing agency: Those federal agencies in Boulder that annually contribute to the facilities support costs (i.e., utilities, cleaning, and maintenance) of the CCC (e.g. NIST, NTIA, parts of NOAA, and the on-site GSA office).

This same terminology applies to the Center's priority / waiting list.

A completed aid application and necessary supporting documents (recent tax return and pay slips) must be submitted for consideration.

Award Calculation

Under the current award structure, selected families with one child will pay no more than 15% of gross family income (GFI) toward child care at Commerce Children's Center. The amount of subsidy awarded will be equal to the amount of tuition that exceeds 15% of the GFI of the selected families. There is no maximum award for single child families. For families with two or more children, the subsidy pays for the amount of CCC tuition in excess of 22% GFI, subject to a cap which limits the subsidy to 50% of the family's total CCC tuition. Because funds are limited, aid is not guaranteed. To maintain continuity in enrollment, families currently enrolled at CCC will be given higher priority over new families. Within those two categories, applications will be prioritized so that families eligible for the largest aid awards will receive highest priority. Families must notify the tuition assistance committee if they experience a change in income of more than \$500 per month, or a change in CCC tuition costs.

Example:

An employee family with a gross family income of \$60,000 wishes to enroll a toddler in CCC. At the current tuition of \$1,180 per month, the family would spend \$14,160 per year, or 24% of its gross income on childcare at CCC. This family would be eligible for a \$5,160 annual subsidy. The family would pay \$750 per month (15 % of their GFI) and the Board would pay the remaining \$430 per month. An award of aid, however, would depend of prioritization; if several families with lower income or higher childcare costs applied, their aid might receive higher priority and this hypothetical family might not receive aid. See the graph on the next page for more examples.

Application

To apply, obtain an application from Erika Winter, Director of the Commerce Children's Center. Return the completed application, with supporting documentation in a sealed envelope to the Center Director. Include a copy of your most recent tax return and payroll slip in the envelope. These records are needed solely for verification, they will not be copied or shared and will be returned to you when the application process is completed. Extreme care is taken to maintain the confidentiality of all application and awards. Award decisions are communicated only to the award recipient and the Center Director. The CCCA Board will be notified of award amounts but not the recipient's identity. Applications will be accepted at any time. Awards will be made as funding permits.

Renewal

Applications must be resubmitted in July for tuition assistance renewal, and assistance amounts may be adjusted to reflect changes in income and tuition. To maintain continuity in enrollment, families currently enrolled at CCC will be given highest priority.

Conditions

A family awarded assistance must notify the Tuition Assistance Committee of any significant changes in income or childcare costs. Specifically, a change in gross family income of more than \$500 per month, or a change in CCC tuition cost (due to a change in classes, enrollment, etc.), require notification within two weeks. All decisions of the Tuition Assistance Committee are final and not subject to appeal. The CCCA reserves the right to modify the tuition assistance program at any time.

The graph below depicts the tuition charged if funds are sufficient to meet tuition assistance guidelines above, based on 2010 tuition levels.

Special Circumstances

The formula presented above for determining tuition assistance does not cover a number of special circumstances that a CCC family might experience. For example, the loss of a job in the middle of the year is not reflected on a tax return for several months. In this type of circumstance, the Board can consider an application for tuition assistance that is not covered by the usual formula. Awards of tuition assistance for special circumstances are intended to be short term (less than one year). If the special circumstances continue beyond the end date for the initial award, the family can apply for further assistance (such subsequent applications should be submitted before the end of the initial award period in order to avoid a gap in assistance). Of course, any assistance depends on the availability of funds.

Applications for “special circumstances” tuition assistance must be made through the Center Director. In addition to the standard application for tuition assistance (see above), a narrative explanation of the family’s special circumstances is required. The Center Director will present the case to the Board without identifying the applicant. A majority vote of the Board will determine whether or not tuition assistance for special circumstances is awarded.

