



February 1, 2026

Important Updates: Your Best Beginnings Scholarship & New Parent Portal

The Early Childhood and Family Support Division is excited to launch the Best Beginnings Scholarship Parent Portal. This secure online platform, accessed through Okta (Montana's secure login system), is designed to make managing your child care scholarship faster and easier by replacing paper-based processes. The Best Beginnings Scholarship Parent Portal will be available starting February 9th.

How This Affects Your Current Case

Your Best Beginnings Scholarship case will continue in its current eligibility period (span).

- **Current Status:** This includes any cases currently in a shortened eligibility span or an extension.
- **Timing of Changes:** New policy changes will only be applied to your case when your current eligibility period ends, and you submit your renewal application.
- **Current Authorizations:** You can review your current authorization plans in the portal under "Scholarship Benefits & Payments".

Key Policy Updates

While your current case remains the same for now, the following rules will apply to all renewals and new applications:

- **No More Paper:** Paper documents will no longer be accepted. All applications and proof of residency, income, and identity must be uploaded directly to the portal.
- **New Care Slots:** Authorized hours are now simplified into **Part-time** (less than 25 hours per week) or **Full-time** (over 25 hours per week).
 - Please note that when your case renews or you change a child's need for care, new limitations will apply.
 - Non-school-age children can be approved for either part-time or full-time care.
 - School-age children are approved for part-time care during the school year.
 - Full-time care may be approved if the child has verified special health needs or if the parent/guardian works non-traditional hours.
 - During the summer, parents or guardians can choose either part-time or full-time care for school-age children.
- **Reporting Changes:** You must report changes to income, address, or work status within **10 calendar days** via the portal.

- **Change in Child Care Provider:** Parents must report a change in their child care provider. A provider change takes effect on the first day of the following month.

Portal Features and Benefits

The Parent Portal allows you to stay informed and manage your benefits in real-time:

- **Apply and Renew:** Submit new applications and renewals instantly.
- **Upload Documents:** Use your phone or computer to upload photos or scans of required paperwork.
- **Track Status:** Receive real-time updates on your application as it is reviewed.
- **Monitor Attendance:** View your child's logged attendance and dispute any errors immediately.
- **Secure Messaging:** Send and receive direct messages and notifications to BBS staff.

Eligibility Options

- **12-Month Eligibility:** Families must submit a full online application and provide all documentation—including proof of Montana residency, citizenship, and income—to qualify for a full 12-month period.
- **Presumptive Eligibility:** New families meeting basic requirements may receive up to 30 days of immediate eligibility while they gather documents for a full application. This offer is available only once every 12 months and cannot be renewed.

Next Steps for Families

1. **Watch for Login Details:** You will receive instructions soon on how to create your Okta account to access the portal.
2. **Enable Your Credentials:** Once you log in, enable your scholarship case credentials to see your specific information.
3. **Go Digital:** Start gathering digital copies (clear photos or PDFs) of your income, residency, and work/school schedules for your next update.
4. **Review Your Case:** Log in to review your current case and authorization plans.

Questions? Please contact your local **Child Care Agency** for assistance with the new system or your specific case. You can find your local agency at
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/childcareresourceandreferral>

Child Care Bureau, Website:

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare>

Child Care Agencies, Website:

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/childcareresourceandreferral>

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Service Provider Locator Website:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ecc6837721384b2a8a2b8123c422589a>

MAQCS Contact Website:

<DPHHS.MT.GOV/ECFSD/MAQCS/Contacts>