

Military OneSource Podcast — Military Child Care Overview: Fee Assistance for Community Child Care

Child & Youth Programs

Episode transcript

Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource Podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit MilitaryOneSource.mil.

Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the podcast, I'm Bruce Moody. Today we're going to talk about military child care. And joining us today is Nichele LeGrand-Murphy. She is with the Military Community and Family Policy's Office of Child and Youth Programs. Nichele, thank you so much for joining us. Welcome to the podcast.

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

Thank you, Bruce, for having me.

Bruce Moody:

Yes. All that bureaucracy aside, you work on child care. And it's a very, very wide-ranging topic, and today we're going to focus on fee assistance. And there is a particular fee assistance program that I want to get into with you today, and it's called Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood fee assistance, sometimes called MCCYN-PLUS. Before we get too far along, why don't you tell us what this program is and how it works?

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

So Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood or the shortened name, MCCYN, is the department's child care fee assistance program for our military families using civilian providers in the local community. These community providers — they are required to meet DOD standards. One is that the provider must have a state license with an annual licensing agency inspection, as well as employee background checks, and also become nationally accredited. When using community providers, we found that there was a lack of nationally accredited child care providers in the civilian community. Military families at times were unable to find providers who were eligible to participate in the fee assistance program. To address this problem, the department launched the Military

Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS initiative, which launched in Maryland and Virginia in 2019.

Bruce Moody:

Nichele, within our offices, it has been made abundantly clear to us that this expansion of this initiative is a huge priority among the department. For those who don't work in our office, can you give us a sense of why leadership has been so focused on this initiative to get it out there, to get it expanded, to offer this affordable child care to military families?

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

The reason why the MCCYN-PLUS initiative is important to our leadership is because, one, it expands access to child care for our military families. It allows a department to utilize the state's quality rating and improvement system, which qualifies providers in the community to be able to participate and receive fee assistance on behalf of a family. When you think about the state's system, a quality rating and improvement system, it's similar to when you're selecting a hotel accommodation based on a scoring system. For example, most states use a rating system to rate child care providers meeting quality standards more than just licensing requirements. This type of quality system expands access to quality as well as directing families to more quality child care options.

Bruce Moody:

Who's eligible for this?

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

Those active-duty members are eligible, but definitely there are other military members that some of us may not be familiar with. We also have eligibility for active-duty personnel, as stated, also reserve component members as well as DOD civilians are eligible for the fee assistance program. So service members and spouses can apply for fee assistance by creating an account on MilitaryChildCare.com, our waitlist management system, to apply for child care.

Bruce Moody:

So from a different angle, who's eligible to become a provider? And again, this is specifically for the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood fee assistance initiative. I know we try to avoid acronyms, but I think that out in the community, people are using this particular acronym a lot, so I guess we'll use it a lot in this podcast as well. A lot of people have like a profanity jar, we have an acronym jar, and I think I'm going to be putting a lot of money in the jar for this episode, but really, we also call it MCCYN-PLUS. So Nichele, if somebody wants to become an MCCYN-PLUS provider, how do they go about doing that?

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

Yes, Bruce, so first, let's talk about eligibility for those providers because, as I stated before, there are requirements that those providers have to meet in order to become approved. So eligible community child care providers — they include both family child care as well as center-based child care programs. These providers must meet the DOD requirements, they have to be state licensed with an annual licensing agency inspection, as well as employee background checks, and also participating in a state's quality improvement system, or QRIS. In order for the provider to actually qualify or to become eligible, they would have to complete an application process, and that would be through our third party administrator's website, which is Child Care Aware® of America, which that information will be given during this podcast.

Bruce Moody:

Now, one of the things that's been happening with this, it's expanding nationally. It's taking some time, but talk to us about this effort to expand this nationally. Where are we now? How far have we gotten along with that?

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

Yes, Bruce. I'm excited to tell everybody that with the expansion, currently MCCYN-PLUS is available in 14 states and one county. Those states include Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Miami-Dade County, Florida. Although these are the first 14 states and one county that we've launched in, we are currently working with implementation and also engagement with other states to include them as a part of participating states as well. It takes a little bit of time to go through every single state because, one thing to remember is, state licensing requirements and also state QRIS standards, or quality rating standards, are very different. They differ from state to state. So as we continue to engage with each state, we are finding how we can best align those requirements to make sure that we are able to qualify those providers to participate.

Bruce Moody:

It's really, really complicated, but you guys are soldiering through it very nicely. Nichele, what I'd like you to do is walk us through the steps that service members and family members will go through when they're applying for military fee assistance.

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

Yes. So, first and foremost, service members and spouses can apply for fee assistance by creating an account on MilitaryChildCare.com to apply for child care. Families will be able to search a full range of military child care options as well as fee assistance as we stated. They will put in a request and once that particular request is honored, they will receive notification and they will begin working to search for a civilian provider in the community. In episode one, we talked about there is a list, a resource list, that is located on MilitaryChildCare.com that provides a full network of DOD providers in the

community that have already committed to working with or participating in the MCCYN-PLUS initiative for those military families to gain access to quality providers in the community.

Bruce Moody:

Thanks, Nichele. There's a lot of information in this space. Where can service members and spouses find more information about enrolling in fee assistance programs?

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

Yes. The first place that they will go is to register for child care and fee assistance at [MilitaryChildCare.com](https://militarychildcare.com). They can also find information, again, at our third party administrator's website who manages the fee assistance program, which is known as Child Care Aware® of America. And also, families can contact Military OneSource as well to consult and to find information for child care as well, especially information on Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS. Those are the main areas or those particular websites that will be posted in the podcast where families can go and find that information on the fee assistance program.

Bruce Moody:

Now, same question, but for the providers, where can community child care providers interested in participating in the military fee assistance program, where can they enroll? Especially when we're talking about Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS — where do they go to enroll?

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

Providers that are interested in becoming MCCYN-PLUS approved, they can actually go to, again, the Child Care Aware® of America website that helps to manage that fee assistance program, but they can also find out additional information on MCC, which is [MilitaryChildCare.com](https://militarychildcare.com) website as well because there is an application process on that website that they can apply to become a MCCYN-approved provider as well.

Bruce Moody:

Well, Nichele, thank you so much for joining us today. We really appreciate you walking us through this.

Nichele LeGrand-Murphy:

You are so welcome, Bruce, and thank you for having me as well.

Bruce Moody:

You're very welcome. Want to remind everybody that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We always like to hear from you. We have a link in the program notes, and you can send us a comment, a question, maybe a suggestion for a future episode. And be sure to subscribe to this podcast wherever you listen to your podcasts because we cover a wide range of topics to help military families navigate military life. I'm Bruce Moody, thank you so much for listening. Take care. Bye-bye.