



County of Onondaga
Office of the County Executive

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County Executive Ryan McMahon Announces Reopening of Child Care Assistance Program

Families on waitlist will start being contacted this week

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – County Executive Ryan McMahon today announced that the Child Care Assistance Program is once again able to open its waitlist, thanks to an allocation of more than \$55 million in the New York State FY 2026–2027 Budget. This significant investment ensures the County can continue serving the 4,912 children currently receiving assistance and end the waitlist that began one year ago. At present, 477 families are on the waitlist.

Over the past several years, Onondaga County has made a historic, unprecedented, and comprehensive commitment to strengthening the child care system, resulting in measurable improvements for families, providers, and the broader community. Since 2021, the County has invested tens of millions of dollars into affordability, stabilization, and capacity-building initiatives. These efforts have produced substantial results, including:

- Creation of over 1,100 new licensed child care slots countywide (prior to the need for a waitlist)
- More than 1,800 families newly approved for assistance due to expanded eligibility
- Stabilization grants issued to over 250 child care providers, helping them improve wages, expand hours, and update facilities
- A 25% increase in the number of providers offering extended or non-traditional hours
- A significant reduction in application processing times, with most cases now completed well within the required 30-day period

The reopening of the waitlist marks another milestone in this sustained, long-term effort to support children, expand opportunities for parents, and improve the strength and resiliency of the local child care infrastructure.

County Executive McMahon said, “This funding allows us to restore access, expand eligibility, and deepen the largest child care investment our county has ever made. Our children deserve a safe, nurturing place to grow, and our parents deserves the peace of mind that makes it possible for them to work and build stability.”

McMahon continued, “We are grateful to our partners at New York State for their efforts to secure this critical funding.”

This progress would not have been possible without the strong partnership between the County and local child care providers. Over the last several years, providers have collaborated with County departments to expand program hours, open new classrooms, and support families navigating the eligibility system.

“Our providers are the backbone of this work,” said County Executive McMahon. “They are the ones opening their doors every day, caring for our youngest residents, and adapting to the needs of working families. Their partnership has helped us build new capacity, prevent closures, and strengthen the entire early childhood system. We are grateful for their dedication and proud to continue investing alongside them.”

The Department of Social Services – Economic Security (DSS-ES) Child Care Unit will begin contacting families on the waitlist based on federal and state priority groups, offering them the opportunity to reapply. Once an updated application is received, DSS-ES has 30 days to determine eligibility.

New applications will continue to be added to the waitlist, if eligible, until all currently listed families have been given the opportunity to reapply. The County anticipates that within approximately two months, it will have processed all existing waitlisted applicants along with any new applications submitted during this period. Normal eligibility processing is expected to resume by the end of August.

Additionally, new income guidelines for the Child Care Assistance Program took effect on June 1, 2026, potentially expanding eligibility for many families. Information on the application process and updated eligibility standards is available at: <https://onondaga.gov/dss/childcare>.

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