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**Audrey Tayse Haynes**  
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**Statewide News Release**

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**Providers Receiving Child Care Assistance Funds  
Must Join State's Quality Rating System**

*Changes slated to take effect in August 2015*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 15, 2014)** – The Cabinet for Health and Family Services today announced proposed changes that will improve access to high-quality child care for children who qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

Under a new proposed regulation, child care providers who provide subsidized child care services will be required to begin participation in the STARS for KIDS NOW (STARS) program – the state's quality-rating system for licensed and certified child care providers – by Aug. 15, 2015.

Governor Steve Beshear said that the change will support the availability of high quality child care to Kentucky's most vulnerable and at-risk child populations.

"STARS for KIDS NOW provides a foundation of early learning to help prepare some of Kentucky's youngest citizens for school, and for life," Gov. Beshear said. "Linking STARS with providers that receive child care assistance will mean that more children have the chance to develop to their full potential."

CCAP provides families who meet certain eligibility requirements the financial help to find and afford child care so parents can work, get job training or go to school.

STARS is free for participating providers and is a graduated system in which providers can reach increasing levels of quality – from Level 1 through Level 4 – in a self-directed approach. Under the new regulation, CCAP-participating providers must be working toward and achieve their Level 1 (or higher) rating by Aug. 15, 2015.

A Level 1 rating is good for two years. To reach a Level 1 ranking, providers must complete the STARS application and participate in a STARS overview.

Both STARS and CCAP are administered by the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) Division of Child Care, part of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS).

CHFS Secretary Audrey Tayse Haynes said that quality child care is especially important for children whose families are CCAP-eligible.

“In terms of school-readiness, children living in poverty are not ready for kindergarten at the rates they should be,” she said. “There is significant disparity for these children, and if we can close that critical achievement gap, we can give them a better foundation for school and a brighter future.”

Studies show that the majority of children’s brain development occurs in the first five years, making the choice of early year child care crucial.

DCBS Commissioner Teresa James said the regulation change will make choosing child care less difficult for families receiving CCAP.

“Every parent should be able to choose the best possible care setting for their child,” she said. “We want to remove the barriers for obtaining high-quality child care so that lower-income families have access to these types of environments,” she said. “A STARS ranking shows that a child-care provider is committed to educating its staff and giving its children a safe, stable, nurturing place to learn and grow.”

Licensed child-care centers and certified family child-care homes (serving up to six unrelated children) may participate in CCAP, but they are not required to do so. The proposed regulation change does not affect child care providers that do not participate in CCAP and does not impact registered child care providers that are limited to providing in-home care to children of relatives, friends or neighbors.

The new requirement will not impact CCAP-participating providers that have already earned a STARS ranking. For providers not participating in CCAP, the STARS for KIDS NOW rating system will remain voluntary.

The public will have a chance to comment on the proposed regulation through close of business Dec. 1, 2014. Formal state agency response will be required for any comment received. The administrative regulation will be published on the following website on or near Nov. 1:

<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/frntpage.htm>.

For more information about this regulation change and to learn how to become STAR rated, log onto <http://www.kentuckypartnership.org/ccap/stars>, a website of the Kentucky Partnership for Early Childhood Services.

Learn more about the CCAP, STARS for KIDS NOW and the Division of Child Care online at [chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcc](http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcc).