BRIDGE FUND

FAQs for Child Care Providers

What is the Bridge Fund?

It's designed to support child care providers who are struggling with enrollment following the cuts to CCDF funding in the state. It does this by providing temporary financial help to high-need working families in Allen County who are eligible for state CCDF assistance but are stuck on the long waitlist.

This is great for families who are struggling to afford care! Where did the funding come from?

In 2025, the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne received a Community Support Grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow initiative. The Community Foundation has allocated $2.5 million from that grant to support the Bridge Fund in Allen County for three years.

Who operates the program?

The Northeast Indiana Early Childhood Coalition (NEIECC) is administering Bridge Fund support through its online platform, CareWorks Connect.

How do I know if my program can accept Bridge Fund?

You must be a licensed center or home, registered ministry, or LLEP program that is already eligible to accept CCDF, and in good standing with the state (i.e., not on probation or with an active investigation).

How are programs prioritized? Funding is limited, so priority is given to programs at higher risk. The priority levels are:

- 1st Priority: Programs with 70%+ CCDF enrollment and a risk of closure.
- 2nd Priority: Programs with 50%+ CCDF enrollment and a risk of closure.
- 3rd Priority: Programs with 25%+ CCDF enrollment and a risk of closure.
- Final Priority: Any programs that accept CCDF vouchers, as the budget allows.

What defines a "risk of closure"?

This means the program is operating at a deficit for the majority of the year, or it is a small for-profit program that cannot fundraise.

Why is prioritization necessary?

The region risks losing critical childcare capacity if providers close. Stabilizing providers helps preserve access for families long-term.

How do families learn about Bridge Fund?

NEIECC is working with child care programs and coalition partners to identify families who are unable to afford quality child care because CCDF vouchers are not available. Families will be invited to apply directly through child care providers. At this time, we ask child care providers to personally contact families, and not share this information widely through social media or websites.

Who can apply?

To qualify, a must meet three main criteria:

- Live in Allen County.
- Have a confirmed "Waitlist" status for the Indiana Child Care Development Fund (CCDF).
- Use an eligible child care provider that is able to accept CCDF vouchers.

How are parents qualified for Bridge Fund?

Families are automatically placed on the CCDF voucher wait list when they apply, and are not qualified until a voucher becomes available for them. When applying for Bridge Fund, parents are required to submit pay stubs for all adults in the household. NEIECC calculates annual income based on the pay stubs, and if a family falls under 135% of the Federal Poverty Level, they can be approved. Because Bridge Fund is a temporary support until a voucher is available, NEIECC has to be reasonably certain that a family will qualify for a voucher before approving them for Bridge Fund.

What does the funding cover?

The grant funds cover up to 75% of CCDF reimbursement rates. NEIECC will pay current CCDF reimbursement rates to providers based on their auspice and Paths to Quality level (details are available here: *https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/provider-reimbursements/*).

What costs are families responsible for?

Families are responsible for a 25% copay, and providers will bill families directly for that amount. Depending on tuition rates, the provider may also charge families an overage if the total of Bridge Fund and parent copays do not meet the tuition costs.

How long does the help last?

Initial support is authorized for one year or until the family's CCF voucher is approved, whichever happens first. Families can renew with Bridge Fund as long as the grant funding is available.

Is this permanent funding?

No. This is currently a pilot initiative intended to test and evaluate long-term approaches to childcare stabilization.

Are there attendance rules?

Yes. In order for families to keep their Bridge Funding, they must follow standard CCDF attendance policies. As of March 2026, funding will be cut off if a child reaches 40 allowable absences or 20 consecutive absences in a year.

How will we receive Bridge Fund payments?

Providers will invoice NEIECC weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, depending on their typical billing frequency. NEIECC will invite participating providers to CareWorks Connect, the platform that manages Bridge Fund, and will soon manage the Tri-Share+ and Co-Share programs.

After creating the profile, uploading required documents and signing the Bridge Fund agreement, the provider will work with NEIECC to determine the Bridge Fund start date and invoice NEIECC for payment.

Is there a limit on how much my program can receive?

Yes. To ensure the grant helps as many programs as possible, funding may be capped at a certain dollar amount/number of children per program.

What if a family we serve does not live in Allen County?

NEIECC is working with foundations and grantors to bring additional dollars to support Bridge Fund in the following counties: Adams, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley. NEIECC will work with early childhood coalition leaders in each county to announce when funding is available.