

# Cornell University – 2009 Child Care Grant Subsidy Program



## Frequently Asked Questions

for Faculty, Academic Staff, & Administrative Staff  
(including benefits-eligible Post-doctorates)

### **What is the Cornell University Child Care Grant Subsidy Program for Faculty, Academic and Administrative Staff?**

Cornell University's Child Care Grant Subsidy Program helps you pay your child care expenses by granting awards of up to \$5,000 a year, tax-free. You pay your child care provider(s) and Cornell University reimburses you through the Select Benefits Dependent Care Spending Account. For all select benefits-eligible faculty, academic staff, and administrative staff members, the grant covers eligible child care, including infant and toddler day care, pre-school/pre-k programs, school holidays, school age summer day camps/programs, and school age before/after school care. This grant subsidy program helps you explore options and find creative solutions to some of the child care challenges you face.

### **Why has Cornell University instituted the Child Care Grant Subsidy Program?**

Cornell University has a long-standing commitment to addressing the work/life and work/family issues of its diverse population. One of these issues, the cost of quality child care, was identified by the University's Task Force for Working Families in 1990. Since that time, Cornell University, through the Division of Human Resources, has developed programs to address the needs of its faculty and academic and administrative staff, such as the flex policy, a near-site child care center, pet insurance, adoption assistance, the catastrophic leave policy, and many others. The Child Care Grant Subsidy Program is one of these many programs.

### **How do I apply for the Cornell University Child Care Grant Subsidy Program?**

To apply for the grant, you must fill out the Child Care Grant Subsidy Program application, which can be found at <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/childcareGrant/index.html>, attach any required documentation, and send your application via **U.S. Mail**, postmarked by September 26, 2008, to:

Child Care Grant Subsidy Program  
Cornell University  
Box 43 Day Hall  
Ithaca, NY, 14853

**Please affix the proper postage amount due in order for your application to arrive in time for consideration. Hand delivered, e-mailed, campus mailed, faxed, and late (postmarked after September 26, 2008) applications will not be accepted.**

For details about the grant, visit the Cornell University Child Care Grant Subsidy website or e-mail: [childcare@cornell.edu](mailto:childcare@cornell.edu), or call (607) 254-KIDS (5437).

### **Who is eligible for the Cornell University Child Care Grant Faculty, Academic Staff, Administrative Staff Program?**

To be eligible for the CCGS, you must (at the time of *receipt* of the grant):

1. Be a select benefits-eligible Cornell faculty, academic staff (including select-benefits eligible post-doctoral staff) or administrative staff
2. Be unmarried or, based on IRS rules for Dependent Care Reimbursement Accounts, have a spouse/partner who is:
  - a. Employed at least part time or
  - b. A full-time student or
  - c. Considered legally disabled or
  - d. Unemployed but actively seeking employment;
3. Have a total household income of less than \$150,000 per year
4. Have a child who is your legal dependent (as defined by IRS regulations), and for whom you are financially responsible or be pregnant and anticipating childcare expenses for 2009
5. Have a child that is an infant through 12 years old, or have an older child that has a disability-related special need which can be documented

Note: Due to Internal Revenue Service rules, faculty, academic staff, and administrative staff who work part time or whose spouse/partner is a full-time student, legally disabled, or unemployed but actively seeking employment, may receive a smaller grant subsidy.

### **Parents with Children Enrolled at the Cornell University Child Care Center**

A supplemental child care grant may be available to help faculty, academic staff, administrative staff, and benefits-eligible post-doctoral associates with the cost of care at the Cornell University Child Care Center, in addition to the existing faculty/staff child care grant. Please contact Cassandre Joseph at 254-KIDS (5437) or [childcare@cornell.edu](mailto:childcare@cornell.edu) for more information.

### **What if I don't live in the Ithaca area? Am I still eligible?**

Yes, as long as you are benefits-eligible.

### **I am a research associate or post doctoral staff, employed with Cornell. Am I eligible?**

If you are a research associate or post doctoral associate with an Employee Identification Number and you receive select benefits from Cornell, then you are eligible to apply for the grant. If you are a post-doctorate fellow receiving income from your home institution and/or not eligible for select benefits, you are not eligible for the child care grant. If you aren't sure of your status, please check with Benefits Services at 255-3936 to understand your eligibility.

### **I am a student. Am I eligible for the child care grant?**

Although you are not eligible for the faculty/staff grant, thanks to funding provided by the Provost's office, graduate, professional, and undergraduate students are eligible to apply for the student child care grant. The application for students, as well as information about the program is available on the web at <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/childcareGrant/index.html>.

### **I am expecting to add a child to my family. Can I apply for the grant even though this child is not in our home yet?**

If you or your partner is expecting or you are planning to adopt, you must apply by the September 26, 2008 deadline, even though your child has not yet been born or not yet arrived. You will then be required to contact us when the child has been born or has arrived, so that further paperwork for your spending account can be completed. Awards will be pro-rated based on the month in which the child was added to the family. New parents have 60 days from the return to work date to enroll in a Select Benefits Dependent Care account. For

more information about Select Benefits visit the web at: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/index.html>, e-mail: [benefits@cornell.edu](mailto:benefits@cornell.edu), or call: (607) 255-3936.

### **I work at the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico. Am I eligible to receive the grant?**

Yes. However, since tax guidelines in Puerto Rico do not currently allow for the use of a tax-sheltered benefit, any award funds granted to you would be considered taxable income.

### **Am I eligible to apply for the grant program each year?**

Yes. In fact, to be considered for the grant each year, you must fill out the application annually.

### **If I received a grant before, can I expect the same amount of grant money this year?**

No. Since the availability of funding for the grant can fluctuate from year-to-year, and since the number of grant applicants can fluctuate from year-to-year, grant awards may increase or decrease from one award year to the next. Changes in income, age of the child and child care expenses may also affect the amount of the grant you receive each year.

### **Why must my spouse be employed, a full-time student, disabled, or actively seeking employment for me to be eligible for the grant?**

IRS regulations of Select Benefits accounts govern the grant conditions. The IRS considers daycare expenses to be eligible expenses if they allow you and your spouse, if married, to work or look for work. If your spouse is unemployed as of the time you expect to receive the grant, please provide a projection of your spouse's income for the upcoming year if they are actively seeking employment. This amount can be based on the previous tax years tax return or an estimation of salary of their given profession. If your significant other remains unemployed throughout the year, and doesn't meet one of the other exceptions/conditions, you will be ineligible for the child care subsidy grant and will not be able to use the grant funds. To understand the term, "actively seeking employment," you should check the IRS regulations related to flexible spending accounts.

### **What if my significant other is self-employed?**

If your spouse or partner is self-employed, please do your best to anticipate his or her earnings based on information from past years. As verification of income, submit Form 1099 or Schedule C from the self-employed party's most recent tax return.

### **How is the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County involved?**

The Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County will be reviewing and processing all Cornell University Child Care Grant Subsidy applications to verify eligibility, child care information, and award determination. For more details about the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County, you can visit their website at: <http://www.daycarecouncil.org/>, e-mail: [chrish@daycarecouncil.org](mailto:chrish@daycarecouncil.org), or call: (607) 273-0259.

### **How do I learn more about childcare options available?**

You may contact Eileen Whang, dependent care consultant, in the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity, and Life Quality for information on locating childcare and eldercare options and resources available locally and nationally. She can be reached at [emw76@cornell.edu](mailto:emw76@cornell.edu) or (607) 255-1917.

The Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County is also available to assist you with identifying other forms of child care if you should find that your children are not in legal care, or to explore other options if the Child Care Grant Subsidy affords you the opportunity to choose other types of care. For more details about the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County, you can visit their website at: <http://www.daycarecouncil.org/>, e-mail: [chrish@daycarecouncil.org](mailto:chrish@daycarecouncil.org), or call: (607) 273-0259.

**How is the decision made on who will receive the grant? How much can I expect to receive?**

Each grant application is looked at individually. Once an application has been received, it is then reviewed to ensure that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria, that the child meets eligibility criteria, and that the applicant is requesting subsidy for a legal child care situation. Those families who meet all of the above criteria will receive a grant that they can access during the grant award year, through Select Benefits, as long as they continue to be employed with Cornell University.

**2009 Estimate Grant Subsidy Chart**

The chart below is based on the financial impact that child care costs place on different income groups. To determine your estimated grant subsidy award:

- 1) Determine your total gross (before taxes) annual household income.
- 2) Find the income range for your gross annual household income on the chart.
- 3) Locate the type of child care/age group for your child currently or expected to be in legal child care.

*Please note that due to IRS regulations the maximum award is \$5,000.*

If your child will be moving from one age group to another during the 2009 fiscal year, your award will be determined based on the number of months in each type of care. Please note that the estimated grant amounts in the chart are based on full-time employment (39 hours) with full-time child care.

Household Income	Infant/Toddler	Preschool	School Age (Academic Year)	School Age (Summer Months)
\$9,000-34,999	35%	30%	30%	30%
\$35,000-59,999	35%	25%	25%	30%
\$60,000-84,999	35%	20%	20%	25%
\$85,000-99,999	25%	9%	7%	25%
\$100,000-150,000	10%	7%	4%	25%

**How is the decision made to determine the amount of the grant?**

Grant award amounts are determined based on a number of factors including total household income, number of eligible children in care, and the type of care that is being used.

**When will I receive a decision about whether I'll receive an award?**

We will mail a decision via U.S. Mail, at your mailing address on or before November 14, 2008 so that you have time to enroll in the Select Benefits program.

## **Where will child care grant applications for faculty, academic and administrative staff be available?**

Applications will be available from the web at <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/childcareGrant/index.html> or can be obtained from your local Human Resources representative, or picked up in 130 Day Hall.

## **When is the application deadline?**

Grant applications must be sent via U.S. Mail, postmarked by September 26, 2008, to:

Child Care Grant Subsidy Program  
Cornell University  
Box 43 Day Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853

**Hand delivered, e-mailed, campus mailed, faxed,  
and late (postmarked after September 26, 2008) applications  
will not be accepted.**

## **Why is there an application deadline?**

The application deadline is established based on Select Benefits Open Enrollment. As the process for determining grant awards includes the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity & Life Quality, the Office of Benefits Services, and the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County, transitioning paperwork through the required administrative offices in a timely manner is essential. Late applications slow the administrative process and impact the timely review of applications that were submitted according to the grant guidelines.

## **How do I estimate my cost of care?**

To estimate your cost of care for the 2009 award year, review the child care expenses you had over the last 12 months. If you anticipate a change in the amount or type of care you used, adjust your estimates accordingly. If you anticipate a change in day care costs as a result of a rate increase/decrease and/or a change in your child care provider, adjust your estimates accordingly. If you are moving and do not have any idea of what child care provider or what type of care you will be using, use an estimate based on the fees charged by child care providers in the area to which you are moving. Your reimbursement will be based on what you have paid to your provider and documented with receipts.

## **What kinds of documentation will I need to provide?**

You will need to provide the two most recent pay stubs of each employed adult in the household (a 1099 or Schedule C for self employed spouses/partners). You should be prepared to provide information about your child care provider (whether formal or informal), including the provider's address and either tax identification number or social security number (if known). Applications submitted without income documentation will be considered incomplete.

## **What types of child-care are eligible for grant subsidy?**

In New York State, there are several forms of legal care, including both informal and regulated care. For definitions of legal care, see information listed in the question below.

Your child(ren) must be enrolled in legal care to be eligible for the Child Care Grant Subsidy. By submitting an application for the CU Child Care Grant Subsidy Program, you authorize the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County or a representative from the Child Care Grant program to verify that your child

care is legal. Any misrepresentation of information can result in the termination of the grant and could have adverse employment consequences.

### **What are the program definitions of legal care?**

The program definitions are the same as New York State Definitions of Legal Child Care and Health Department Standards for Summer Day Camp. These include the following categories:

**Informal Care** - Unregulated but legal (no permit required):

1. Provider is required to claim income from childcare services provided on taxes.
2. A person who does child care in his/her home for a maximum of 2 children at a time, in addition to his/her own children, or;
3. A person or program providing care for any number of children for less than 3 hours a day, or,
4. A person who provides care in the home of the child (in-home care), or;
5. A person who is closely related to the children in care (includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, first cousins).

**Regulated Care** - All child care is regulated by the NYS Office of Children and Family services which issues permits (registrations and licenses):

**Family Day Care** - must be registered. One provider, age 18 or older, receives a permit to care for a maximum of 5 - 8 children on a regular basis in a personal residence. Maximum capacity depends on the ages of children in care.

**Group Family Day Care** - receives a license. The maximum capacity is 10 - 14 children and depends on the ages of children in care. Care is provided on a regular basis in a personal residence by approved caregivers who are age 18 or older. One caregiver is required for each two children under age 2 years. A minimum of two providers must be present whenever 7 or more children are in care.

**Day Care Center** - must be licensed. Care is provided to 6 or more children on a regular basis for more than 3 hours a day, usually at a location other than a residence. There are strict building, staffing and program requirements. Children are grouped by age (6 wks. - 18 mo., 18 mo. - 3 years, 3 - 5 years, 6+ years), which may not mix with other groups.

**Small Day Care Center** - must be registered. Care is provided to 3 - 6 children on a regular basis at a location other than a residence.

**School Age Child Care** - must be registered. Care is provided on a regular basis to 7 or more children who are under 13 years of age and who attend kindergarten or a higher grade. Care is usually provided at a site other than a personal residence.

**Camps** – In NYS, summer camps must have a permit from the Department of Health to operate legally. The camp is required to be inspected twice yearly and the inspection reports and required plans are filed at the health department and are available for review. For more information about the New York State Department of Health, visit the web at: [www.health.state.ny.us/home.html](http://www.health.state.ny.us/home.html), e-mail: [bob@tompkins-co.org](mailto:bob@tompkins-co.org).

### **What if I don't currently have child care or don't know my summer care providers?**

Please do your best to estimate whom your providers will be as well as the projected costs. We know that, in some cases, such as summer camp, we are asking you to do this 10 months ahead of time, and that plans could change. One suggestion is to contact your prospective care provider(s) for estimates of costs or to check the Ithaca Youth Bureau's web page, <http://www.co.tompkins.ny.us/youth/campguide/index.asp>, for rates generally charged by local summer camps. Another source of information is basing the cost of 2009 care for summer on last summer's total cost or based on what the providers in the local area charge.

### **I have a child with a disability-related special need, can I receive assistance?**

Yes, if you have a child over the age of 12, and you can provide documentation that your child has been diagnosed with a disability-related special need requiring care beyond the age of 12, you may apply for assistance. Therapy is not covered by the grant.

### **Do overnight camp expenses or extracurricular expenses qualify for the child care grant?**

No, overnight camp expenses and extracurricular activities do not qualify for the child care grant, per IRS guidelines for Flexible Spending Accounts. However, day camp expenses are eligible.

### **How are the grant awards calculated?**

Grant award amounts are determined based on a number of factors: total household income, number of eligible children in care, and cost of child care as a percentage of the household income.

### **How do I collect my grant subsidy award?**

In order to collect your grant subsidy, you need to participate in Cornell's Select Benefits Dependent Care program. If you are not already participating in this program, you must complete, sign and return a Select Benefits Dependent Care enrollment form to 130 Day Hall (this will be mailed to you in preparation for Open Enrollment). The Benefit Services office within the Office of Human Resources must receive your enrollment form in their office by the due date. There are IRS regulations on the maximum amount an employee can contribute to the dependent care account, and/or the health care account. If you have any questions on this, contact Benefits Services at (607) 255-3936.

Your grant will be available to you for reimbursement through your Select Benefits Dependent Care Account from January 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010. Please Note: You are entitled to be reimbursed for child care expenses incurred from January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009. The March 31 deadline for claims submission is a grace period to file expenses that were incurred during 2009. To collect your grant award, you must fill out a Dependent Care Account Reimbursement Form and attach receipts from your day care provider. You may only submit reimbursement for services rendered during your employment with Cornell University.

You can download a copy of the Select Benefits Reimbursement Form at:

<http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/index.html>, obtain a copy from your local Human Resources representative, or pick up a copy in 130 Day Hall.

### **When can I expect to begin using my grant award?**

Your grant will be placed in your Select Benefits Dependent Care Spending Account. You are eligible to begin requesting reimbursements via Select Benefits from the grant as of January 1, 2009.

### **Will the grant be paid to my day care provider?**

No. Cornell Child Care Grants will be deposited into a Select Benefits Dependent Care Reimbursement Account for you. When you pay for child care expenses, you will then submit receipts for those expenses to Aon Consulting, Cornell University's Select Benefits Plan Administrator, for reimbursement.

### **Is there a maximum total amount that I might receive?**

Yes. The maximum amount of grant funding that any household may receive is \$5000. This is because grant awards are distributed by process of reimbursement through Select Benefits and the IRS maximum amount of sheltered income allowed for a Select Benefits Dependent Care Account is \$5,000. For more information about IRS regulations on tax-sheltered income visit the web at: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), or call (800) 829-1040. Hearing Impaired callers: 1-800-829-4059 (TTY).

## **What should I do if I know that I will not use all of my grant money?**

If you know that you will not be able to use some or your entire grant award, please notify Cassandre Joseph (254-KIDS) so that those funds can be recovered by the grant. It is your responsibility to notify the program that you will not use the full amount of the grant that was awarded to you. Benefit Services will then adjust the amount that shows on your W-2 form.

## **What should I do if I leave Cornell during this year?**

If you leave Cornell during the award year, be sure to notify Cassandre Joseph (254-KIDS). You should also be sure to request reimbursement for child care only for the time during which you were employed with Cornell University.

## **Does the grant amount show anywhere on my W-2 form?**

Yes, it does. The amount of your award will be reflected on your W-2. This amount is not considered taxable income, but is employer money and is displayed for IRS reporting purposes. If you are an Arecibo employee who works in Puerto Rico, your award amount will be reflected as taxable income.

## **How will the grant affect my Dependent Care Reimbursement Account if I am already contributing my own money to it?**

Once you know the amount of your Cornell grant, you will be able to calculate whether the grant will fully fund your needs for the rest of the year. You may still want to contribute from your own funds to your Select Benefits account below the \$5,000 limit.

## **When is the Select Benefits Open Enrollment period?**

You will be advised by October what the dates for open enrollment are. For more information about Select Benefits Dependent Care Accounts go to: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/index.html>, e-mail: <mailto:benefits@cornell.edu>, or call: (607) 255-3936.

## **Where can I find a Select Benefits Reimbursement Form?**

You can obtain a Select Benefits Reimbursement Form on the web at <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/index.html>, from your local Human Resources representative, or you can pick one up in 130 Day Hall.

## **Where can I find more information on Select Benefits?**

For more information on Select Benefits Accounts contact Benefits Services at:

130 Day Hall  
(607) 255-3936  
<http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/index.html>  
[benefits@cornell.edu](mailto:benefits@cornell.edu)