

§ 261.56 What happens if a parent cannot obtain needed child care?

(a)(1) If the individual is a single custodial parent caring for a child under age six, the State may not reduce or terminate assistance based on the parent's refusal to engage in required work if he or she demonstrates an inability to obtain needed child care for one or more of the following reasons:

- (i) Appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from the home or work site is unavailable;
- (ii) Informal child care by a relative or under other arrangements is unavailable or unsuitable; or
- (iii) Appropriate and affordable formal child care arrangements are unavailable.

(2) Refusal to work when an acceptable form of child care is available is not protected from sanctioning.

(b)(1) The State will determine when the individual has demonstrated that he or she cannot find child care, in accordance with criteria established by the State.

(2) These criteria must:

- (i) Address the procedures that the State uses to determine if the parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care;
- (ii) Include definitions of the terms “appropriate child care,” “reasonable distance,” “unsuitability of informal care,” and “affordable child care arrangements”; and
- (iii) Be submitted to us.

(c) The TANF agency must inform parents about:

(1) The penalty exception to the TANF work requirement, including the criteria and applicable definitions for determining whether an individual has demonstrated an inability to obtain needed child care;

(2) The State's process or procedures (including definitions) for determining a family's inability to obtain needed child care, and any other requirements or procedures, such as fair hearings, associated with this provision; and

(3) The fact that the exception does not extend the time limit for receiving Federal assistance.

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