

Help paying for child care in Fairfax County

How Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program works, step by step. Updated October 2026.

Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program helps families pay for child care while they work, study or look for a job. Shining Light Christian School accepts it.

This guide explains how the program works and how to apply if you live in Fairfax County. The program, not the school, decides who qualifies and what each family pays.

Could my family qualify?

The program looks at four things.

Your child. Under 13 years old, or up to 18 with special needs. A U.S. citizen or qualified immigrant, with immunizations up to date.

Why you need care. You work (full time or part time), go to school or job training, or are looking for work. Looking for work alone is covered for up to 90 days.

Your household income. If you have a child under 5 who isn't in kindergarten yet, the limit is 85% of Virginia's median income:

Family size	Yearly household income, before taxes
2 people	up to \$82,952
3 people	up to \$102,470
4 people	up to \$121,989
5 people	up to \$141,507
6 people	up to \$161,025

If all your children are 5 or older, the limit is lower. For example, a family of four can have up to \$82,500 a year.

Savings. You confirm on the application that your family's assets are under \$1 million. You don't need paperwork for this.

These limits are as of fall 2026 and change every year. Fairfax County's website may still show last year's lower chart. The county makes the final decision. If you're not sure, use the quick eligibility check on CommonHelp or call the county (numbers at the end).

How to apply, in 4 steps

1. **Gather your papers.** The list is in the next section.
2. **Apply.**
 - **Online:** at commonhelp.virginia.gov.
 - **On paper:** Fairfax families send the paper application to the county's Child Care Assistance and Referral office (CCAR) by email, fax or mail, or drop it off.
3. **Name your child care provider.** The application asks you to choose one. For Shining Light, use:
 - Shining Light Christian School
 - 4090 Lafayette Center Dr., Suite H, Chantilly, VA 20151
 - 571-752-6994 · state license/facility ID 1110269
4. **Go over your plan with CCAR, and send anything they ask for.**
 - CCAR reviews a short service plan with you.
 - If something is missing, you get at least 10 days to send it.

Live in Loudoun County?

- Apply through the Loudoun County Department of Family Services: online at CommonHelp, or on paper. Their number is 703-777-0353.
 - You can still choose Shining Light.
-

What to have ready

- The application, with every section signed and dated.
- **If you work:**
 - three recent pay stubs in a row for each working parent, dated within the last 30 days;
 - or, if you just started, a letter from your employer;
 - plus the county's Employment Verification Form;
 - your work schedule (for example, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday).
- **If you're in school or training:** your official schedule, with the start and end dates, days and hours.
- **If you're looking for work:** say so on the application or tell your specialist.
- **Other income:** proof of any, such as child support or Social Security.
- **Your child's citizenship or legal status:** a birth certificate, hospital birth letter, passport, or proof of qualified immigrant status.
- **Proof of address, dated within 30 days:** a utility or cable bill in your name (not a cell phone bill), a lease or a mortgage statement.
- **Your photo ID.**

- **Your child's immunization record.**

The county may ask for more.

What happens next

- **Within 30 days:**
 - You get a letter, called a Notice of Action, saying whether you're approved.
 - In some cases it can take up to 60 days.
- **If funding is full:**
 - The letter says so, and you're placed on the waitlist.
 - Families with a child under 5 who isn't in kindergarten are at the top of the list.
 - Fairfax County says there is a waitlist right now and still encourages families to apply.
 - Statewide, the waitlist fell from nearly 13,000 children in 2025 to just over 2,000 in June 2026, and the state budget adds about 6,700 new slots.
- **Once you're approved:** the program pays from the day you're approved and your provider is chosen. It doesn't pay for care before that.
- **Each day:** you record your child's attendance in Child Care PASS, the state's check-in system, the way your school shows you.
- **Your approval lasts at least 12 months.** Then you renew.
- **Within 10 days, tell the county if:**
 - your income goes over the limit;
 - someone joins or leaves your household;
 - you move;
 - you change providers.

What families pay

Each family pays a monthly copay for each child in the program, for up to three children. The copay depends on income. Your total copay is never more than 5% of your family's income.

Family income	Monthly copay per child
No income	\$0
Up to the federal poverty line	\$5
101–150% of the poverty line	\$125
151–200%	\$175
201–250%	\$225
251–300%	\$275

Family income	Monthly copay per child
301–350%	\$325
Above 350%, up to the income limit	\$375

- You pay the copay to your child care provider.
- A provider whose tuition is higher than the program's payment may also charge families the difference, under a written agreement made when the child enrolls.

Kindergarten to 2nd grade

- For children in kindergarten and up, the program doesn't pay for the school day.
- It can help with before- and after-school care, and with care on days public schools close unexpectedly.

How Shining Light works with subsidy families

- Shining Light accepts Virginia's Child Care Subsidy Program. The state's child care search lists the school as a current subsidy provider.
- The school is open 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday, for children from age 2 through 2nd grade.
- Our admissions team can walk you through these steps on a 15-minute call. Only the program can say whether you qualify.

Who to contact

Fairfax County CCAR (Child Care Assistance and Referral)	703-449-8484 (TTY 711), Monday–Friday 8:00 am – 4:30 pm · CCARinfo@fairfaxcounty.gov · fax 703-324-3917 · 12011 Government Center Pkwy., 8th Floor, Fairfax, VA 22035
CommonHelp (apply online)	commonhelp.virginia.gov · 855-635-4370
Loudoun County Department of Family Services	703-777-0353
Shining Light Christian School	571-752-6994 · admissions@shininglightschool.org · shininglightschool.org

Program rules are from the Virginia Department of Education's Child Care Subsidy Program Guidance Manual and Fairfax County CCAR, checked October 22, 2026. Rules and limits change; the program has the final word.