



In partnership with

CONNECTICUT
Early Childhood

NEW LONDON COUNTY TRI-SHARE PILOT

A cost-sharing model
between employers,
employees, and the
State of Connecticut

A young child with curly hair is playing with colorful blocks. The child is wearing a blue sweater and jeans. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green grass and a yellow object.

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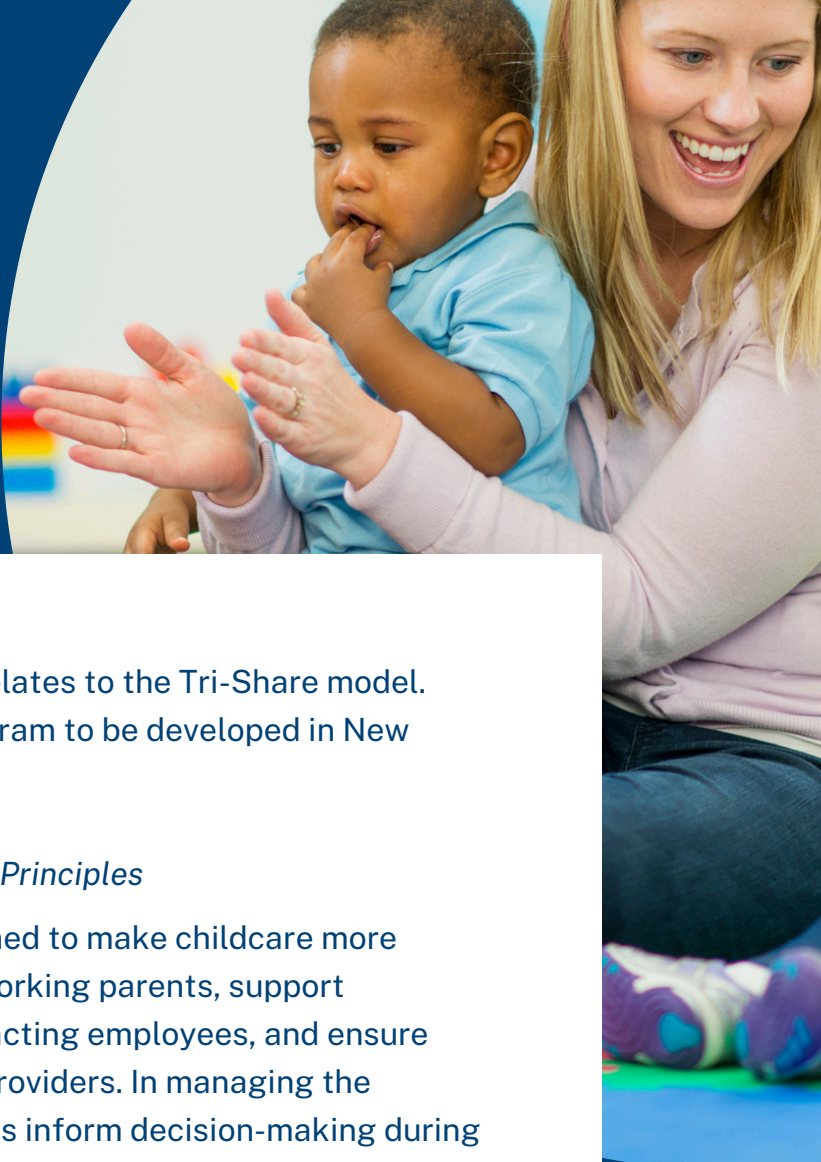
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Overview

As a pilot program, the Tri-Share initiative aims to address the childcare crisis in New London County by establishing a cost-sharing model between employers, employees, and the State of Connecticut. The pilot will provide valuable data and insights into the program's efficacy, allowing policymakers and stakeholders to make necessary adjustments before potentially scaling the program to a wider audience.

The Tri-Share pilot program in New London County is an exciting development in the effort to improve access to affordable, high-quality childcare services and support families, employers, and the local economy.



History

The Connecticut bill HB 5002 relates to the Tri-Share model. This bill establishes a pilot program to be developed in New London County.

Program Objectives and Guiding Principles

The Tri-Share program is designed to make childcare more affordable and accessible for working parents, support employers in retaining and attracting employees, and ensure the sustainability of childcare providers. In managing the program, clear guiding principles inform decision-making during the implementation of the Tri-Share program:

- Provide participating parents with the freedom to choose their preferred childcare providers.
- Assist individuals who are employed but face financial constraints by addressing the barriers that limit their access to existing local, state, and federal programs, ensuring inclusivity for those who may be underserved.

By adhering to these principles, the Tri-Share program aims to create a supportive environment that benefits working families, employers, and childcare providers alike.



Administration, Roles, and Responsibilities

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of LEARN, the administrator, and Tri-Share participants. To ensure smooth collaboration, any of these entities may be asked to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to participate in or administer components of the Tri-Share program.

These MOUs serve to establish clear expectations and agreements among all parties involved in the program, thereby fostering effective communication, accountability, and cooperation between LEARN and the participants throughout the implementation and administration of the Tri-Share initiative.

Coordination of Payments

In line with the guidelines outlined in this manual, LEARN will develop and implement payment policies and manage the billing and fee coordination among childcare providers, employers, employees, and the State of Connecticut. LEARN will make every effort to accommodate the preferences of all parties involved and establish a payment schedule that occurs either weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, ensuring a streamlined payment process.

Coordination of Payments

LEARN will use the Tri-Share Monthly Data Collection spreadsheet using established templates.

Program Evaluation

LEARN will actively participate in monthly evaluations and collaborate with stakeholders to assess program outcomes. The insights gained from these evaluations will contribute to identifying areas of improvement and implementing necessary adjustments to enhance the overall effectiveness and impact of the Tri-Share program. This commitment to ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement ensures that the Tri-Share initiative remains responsive to the evolving needs of participants and maintains its relevance in addressing the challenges of accessible and affordable childcare.

Facilitating Access to Licensed Childcare Providers

LEARN will offer assistance to employees in locating licensed childcare providers that cater to their specific requirements. This support will be delivered either directly by LEARN or in collaboration with existing childcare resource and referral agencies, such as 211 Child Care. By providing this essential service, LEARN ensures that employees can access suitable and reliable childcare options that meet their unique needs and preferences, fostering a supportive environment for working families within the Tri-Share program.

Eligibility Determinations for Employees

LEARN will gather relevant household and income data and determine if the employee is eligible to participate in the program.





Participant Roles and Responsibilities

Employee and Employer Contributions and Responsibilities

Employees participating in the Tri-Share program are accountable for contributing one-third of their childcare costs. In the event of a change in their employment status, employees are responsible for covering the full payment to their childcare provider.

Employers enrolled in the program must coordinate their portion of the benefit with LEARN.

LEARN, as the administrator, is in charge of managing the state's one-third contribution and the employers one-third and processing invoices submitted by childcare providers.

Employers who wish to discontinue their participation in the Tri-Share program must provide a written notice to LEARN and affected employees at least 60 days prior to withdrawal. This notice period allows for a smooth transition and ensures that employees have adequate time to make alternative childcare arrangements if necessary.

Eligibility

Employer Eligibility

Eligibility: To participate in the Tri-Share program, employers must be located within New London County.

Employer Contribution Flexibility: Employers have the discretion to determine the level of support offered to their employees and families. Factors to consider may include:

- Providing a single childcare benefit per participating family.
- Allocating multiple slots based on the number of children requiring care.
- Offering one or multiple slots according to the financial needs of participating families.

Participation Scale: There are no restrictions on the minimum or maximum number of employees who can participate in the program. As long as the employer's contribution represents one-third of the employee's childcare costs, there is no minimum financial commitment required from the employer.

Data Collection: Employers are expected to actively participate in the data collection processes initiated by the evaluation team. These processes may involve focus groups, surveys, interviews, and other methods. Employers should be prepared to contribute to the best of their ability to facilitate program evaluation and improvement.





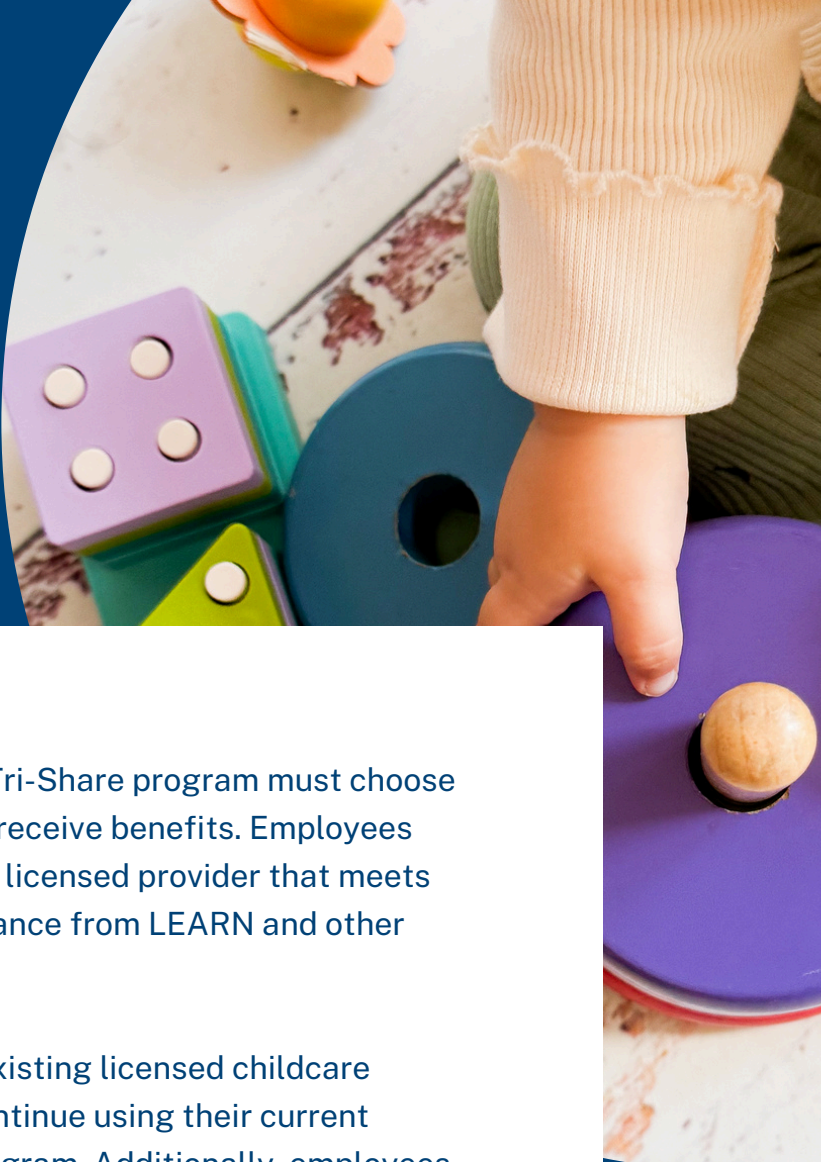
Employee Eligibility

To enroll in the Tri-Share program, an employee must meet the following criteria:

- **Residency:** Employees must reside within the state of Connecticut to be eligible for participation.
- **Exclusion of Other Subsidies:** Employees should not be receiving any other childcare subsidies while participating in the Tri-Share program.

If an employee meets the initial eligibility requirements but appears to be eligible for additional childcare subsidies based on their household income, they will be provided with relevant information about potential subsidies that may be available to them. This ensures that employees are aware of all possible financial assistance options to help them make informed decisions regarding their childcare arrangements.

Eligible childcare includes all licensed part-time or full-time care, including before- and after-school care, preschool programs, and summer care/camps. Children of all ages qualify for Tri-Share, as long as they receive care from a licensed provider.



Provider Eligibility

Employees participating in the Tri-Share program must choose a licensed childcare provider to receive benefits. Employees have the flexibility to select any licensed provider that meets their specific needs, with assistance from LEARN and other available resources.

If an employee already has an existing licensed childcare provider, they may choose to continue using their current provider under the Tri-Share program. Additionally, employees have the option to place their children with multiple providers, based on their unique circumstances and preferences.

It is important to note that eligible childcare providers do not need to be located within New London County, allowing employees to select the most suitable provider for their family's needs.

Enrollment

Employer Enrollment

Employee Pre-tax or After-tax Withholding

Employers are advised to seek guidance from their respective tax professionals during the Tri-Share program enrollment process. It is essential to note that any information provided here should not be considered official tax advice. Employers and their tax advisors should consult with the Connecticut Department of Treasury or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for any additional clarification or guidance on tax-related matters pertaining to their participation in the Tri-Share program.

This approach ensures that employers have accurate and up-to-date information regarding any potential tax implications and can make informed decisions based on their unique circumstances and applicable regulations.

Employee Enrollment

An employee is officially enrolled in Tri-Share on the date of the first Tri-Share-supported payment to a provider. Enrollment in Tri-Share requires the completion of the eligibility screening approval process and the signing of all relevant MOUs, as well as the selection or continued use of a licensed provider.





LEARN's Role in Employee Eligibility Screening

LEARN, as the facilitator, is responsible for managing the eligibility screening process for potential employee participants in the Tri-Share program. The screening must be completed before an eligible employee can enroll, but it is not a prerequisite for employers and providers to complete their own enrollment in Tri-Share.

The eligibility screening process conducted by LEARN currently includes gathering and analyzing household data from employees. This data may encompass factors such as household size, income, location, and others. LEARN may also request recent pay statements to verify the income of potential participants.

It is important to note that all information collected during the screening process is kept confidential by LEARN and is only used for reporting purposes to the State of Connecticut. The primary purpose of this data collection is to ensure that eligible employees can benefit from the Tri-Share program while maintaining their privacy and protecting their personal information.

Reassessment Process

The initial Tri-Share approval is valid for one year, after which employees' eligibility must be reassessed.

LEARN will lead the reassessment process, which will begin within 45 to 60 days of the reassessment deadline. A hub will notify the employee and employer of the need to conduct an employee eligibility reassessment during this window.

Data Collection and Management

To facilitate data-driven decision-making, program administrators in Connecticut will submit quarterly reports on their progress to the designated state authority.

Data collected for these reports will encompass participant information, program performance metrics (e.g., the number of children served, referrals to relevant state programs, types of childcare, contribution amounts, etc.), demographic data (e.g., name, race and ethnicity, gender, marital status, location, household size, etc.), and other pertinent details related to finance, childcare, and participant characteristics (e.g., household income, number of children, number of children served by Tri-Share, etc.). The state authority will create and maintain the data collection template and update it as required.

The information gathered from these reports and other program data will enable the state authority to support program implementation and evaluation efforts. This includes assessing the effectiveness of the Tri-Share program, establishing and monitoring program goals to align with relevant strategic plans, compiling an annual report documenting program outcomes, and offering recommendations to boost enrollment and enhance program performance.

