

1 including the suggested methodology to be used for setting rates, as well as time frames for
2 implementing the methodology.

3
4 **ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY MARKET RATE INCREASES/CERTAIN AGE**
5 **GROUPS AND COUNTIES**

6 **SECTION 12B.3.** Section 12B.2A of S.L. 2015-241 reads as rewritten:

7 "**SECTION 12B.2A.(a)** Beginning January 1, 2016, the Department of Health and Human
8 Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education, shall increase the child care
9 subsidy market rates to the rates recommended by the 2015 Child Care Market Rate Study from
10 birth through two years of age in three-, four-, and five-star-rated child care centers and homes in
11 tier one and tier two counties. For purposes of this section, tier one and tier two counties shall
12 have the same designations as those established by the N.C. Department of Commerce's 2015
13 County Tier Designations.

14 "**SECTION 12B.2A.(b)** Beginning October 1, 2016, the Division shall increase the child care
15 subsidy market rates to the rates recommended by the 2015 Child Care Market Rate Study from
16 age three through five years in three-, four-, and five-star-rated child care centers and homes in tier
17 one and tier two counties."

18
19 **STUDY COSTS AND EFFECTIVENESS ASSOCIATED WITH NC PRE-K SLOTS**

20 **SECTION 12B.4.(a)** As the objective of the NC Pre-K program is to provide
21 high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds, the
22 Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education,
23 shall study the costs and effectiveness associated with funding slots for the NC Pre-K program. In
24 conducting the study, the Division shall review and determine the following:

- 25 (1) The total cost to fund a NC Pre-K slot, including administration and any local
26 costs.
- 27 (2) The program's anticipated effectiveness in preparing eligible four-year-olds in
28 the five developmental domains outlined in the North Carolina Foundations for
29 Early Learning and Development.
- 30 (3) Whether the program's effectiveness as reviewed pursuant to subdivision (2) of
31 this subsection justifies the costs associated with funding NC Pre-K slots or
32 whether there are other alternatives to achieve the same objectives.
- 33 (4) The State share needed to fund a NC Pre-K slot by each setting, including
34 public schools, child care facilities, and Head Start.
- 35 (5) The amount of funds needed to maintain the current number of NC Pre-K slots
36 if the per slot cost was increased to the amount recommended by the study.
- 37 (6) Recommendations on how often the NC Pre-K slot costs should be evaluated
38 and reported to the General Assembly.
- 39 (7) Any other relevant issues the Division deems appropriate.

40 **SECTION 12B.4.(b)** The Division of Child Development and Early Education shall
41 report its findings and recommendations, including any legislative proposals, to the chairs of the
42 House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services and the Senate Appropriations
43 Committee on Health and Human Services and the Fiscal Research Division on or before February
44 1, 2017.

45
46 **STATE AGENCY COLLABORATION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD**
47 **EDUCATION/TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN**

48 **SECTION 12B.5.(a)** The Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation
49 with the Department of Public Instruction and any other agencies or organizations that administer,
50 support, or study early education in this State, and within resources currently available, shall
51 collaborate on an ongoing basis to develop and implement a statewide vision for early childhood

1 education. In collaborating in this effort, the agencies shall develop a comprehensive approach to
2 early childhood education, birth through third grade, including creating cross agency
3 accountability with a comprehensive set of data indicators, including consideration of the NC
4 Pathways to Grade-Level Reading, to monitor and measure success of the early childhood
5 education systems.

6 **SECTION 12B.5.(b)** The Department of Health and Human Services, the Department
7 of Public Instruction, and any other agencies or organizations that administer, support, or study
8 early education programs in this State shall report their findings and recommendations, including
9 any legislative proposals, resulting from the initiative to develop and implement a statewide vision
10 for early childhood education pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. The agencies shall make
11 an initial report to Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and the
12 Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on or before January 1, 2017, submit a follow
13 up report to those same committees on or before January 1, 2018, and may make any subsequent
14 reports, annually, on or before January 1, as needed to those same committees.

15 **SECTION 12B.5.(c)** The Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation
16 with the Department of Public Instruction, shall promote the successful transition of children who
17 receive assistance from NC Pre-K program and the Child Care Subsidy Assistance program for
18 four- and five-star rated facility classrooms to kindergarten. In its promotion of a successful
19 transition from preschool to kindergarten, the Department of Health and Human Services shall
20 recommend that both NC Pre-K teachers and preschool teachers prepare a preschool to
21 kindergarten transition plan for each child transitioning to kindergarten that documents the child's
22 strengths and needs based on the five Goals and Developmental Indicator domains for children's
23 developmental and learning progress that are based on the NC Foundations for Early Learning and
24 Development. The preparation of the transition plan shall only apply to children who receive
25 assistance through the NC Pre-K program or the Child Care Subsidy Assistance program. It is the
26 intent of the General Assembly that the Departments utilize this transition plan until such time as
27 the standardized program to transition children from preschool to kindergarten, required pursuant
28 to subsection (e) of this section, is developed and implemented.

29 **SECTION 12B.5.(d)** The Department of Health and Human Services shall report on
30 the implementation of the transition plan required pursuant to subsection (c) of this section,
31 including any findings and recommendations and any legislative proposals, to the Joint Legislative
32 Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and the Joint Legislative Education
33 Oversight Committee on or before December 15, 2016.

34 **SECTION 12B.5.(e)** The Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation
35 with the Department of Public Instruction, shall develop and implement a standardized program to
36 transition children from preschool to kindergarten. In developing this standardized transition
37 program, the Department of Health and Human Services shall identify, at a minimum:

- 38 (1) Methods to standardize student transition information such that it is
39 quantifiable.
- 40 (2) Recommendations for sharing data contained in a student's transition plan
41 between preschool teachers and either kindergarten teachers or the schools that
42 receive the incoming kindergarten students.
- 43 (3) Recommendations for sharing data contained in a student's transition plan
44 between preschool teachers and the parents or guardians of the child who is
45 transitioning to kindergarten.
- 46 (4) Recommendations for preschool teacher training and continuing education to
47 support their role in completing transition plans for preschool children.
- 48 (5) Recommendations for baseline information that should be compiled in
49 transition plans for students transitioning to kindergarten.

- 1 (6) Procedures for the management of transition plan documents, including
2 recommendations for the length of records retention, provisions for
3 confidentiality, and proper disposal.
- 4 (7) Any other components the Department deems appropriate in the provision of
5 information between preschools, students' families, and kindergartens.

6 **SECTION 12B.5.(f)** The Department of Health and Human Services shall report on
7 the development of the standardized transition program required pursuant to subsection (e) of this
8 section, including any findings and recommendations and any legislative proposals, to the Joint
9 Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and the Joint Legislative
10 Education Oversight Committee on or before January 1, 2018.

11

12 **SUBPART XII-C. DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

13

14 **CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM CHANGES**

15 **SECTION 12C.1.(a)** Federal Improvement Plan Implementation. – The Department
16 of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, shall implement the requirements of
17 the federal Program Improvement Plan to bring our State into compliance with national standards
18 for child welfare policy and practices. The Division shall collaborate with county departments of
19 social services to develop a model of oversight that supports program outcomes and a county's
20 ability to meet performance standards as outlined in the Program Improvement Plan. Oversight
21 may include support for continuous quality improvement, staff training, and data analysis. During
22 the first two years of implementing the Program Improvement Plan, the Division shall ensure the
23 three new Human Services/Planner Evaluator positions funded by this act are used to carry out the
24 activities detailed in the Plan. Upon complete implementation of the Plan, these positions shall be
25 used in child welfare services to continually improve outcomes for children and families.

26 The Division shall report on the implementation and outcomes of the Program
27 Improvement Plan to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services.
28 The report shall be submitted semiannually on February 1 and August 1 of each year, with the first
29 report submitted on August 1, 2016, and the final report on February 1, 2019.

30 **SECTION 12C.1.(b)** Statewide Strategic Plan. – The Division of Social Services shall
31 develop a statewide strategic plan for child welfare services that complements the required federal
32 Program Improvement Plan. The statewide strategic plan shall, at a minimum, address the findings
33 of the North Carolina Statewide Child Protective Services Evaluation, which was conducted as
34 required by Section 12C.1(f) of S.L. 2014-100, in the areas of county performance, caseload sizes,
35 administrative structure, adequacy of funding, social worker turnover, and monitoring and
36 oversight. The plan shall also address measures for ensuring that Native American children in this
37 State are served in a culturally appropriate manner, including in placements for adoption and
38 foster care. The Division shall submit the plan to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
39 Health and Human Services by December 1, 2016, for consideration by the 2017 General
40 Assembly.

41 **SECTION 12C.1.(c)** Child Welfare/NC FAST. – The Department of Health and
42 Human Services, Division of Social Services, shall continue toward completion of the child
43 welfare component of the North Carolina Families Accessing Services Through Technology (NC
44 FAST) system to (i) bring the State into compliance with the Statewide Information System
45 systematic factor of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and (ii) ensure that data
46 quality meets federal standards and adequate information is collected and available to counties to
47 assist in tracking children and outcomes across counties.

48 It is the intent of the General Assembly that the child welfare component of the NC
49 FAST system be operational by December 31, 2017. To that end, the Department of Health and
50 Human Services, Division of Social Services, shall report on the development, implementation,
51 and outcomes of the child welfare component of the NC FAST system to the Joint Legislative