San Francisco Department of
Early Childhood

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www.sfdec.org

Early Learning For All (ELFA)

Eligibility Expansion 2026-2027

Webinar Q&A Summary

This document summarizes the questions and answers from the May 2026 ELFA Eligibility Expansion webinar series. The Q&A section below focuses on two core topics covered in the webinar: (1) the expansion of ELFA eligibility to families at 151–200% AMI with the new ELFA Half Tuition Credit, and (2) the new ELFA Enroll pay process. Additional themes and feedback raised by participants are summarized separately at the end of this document.

Q: How can we refer families to apply for the ELFA Half Tuition Credit?

A: There are two scenarios for how to support families interested in ELFA Half Tuition Credit.

Currently enrolled Early Learning For All families:
Families already enrolled in an Early Learning For All program that earn between 151% and 200% of the Area Median Income will be able to complete their eligibility certification before July 1, 2026, by working with Children's Council, Wu Yee, or with their ELFA provider that receives funding directly from DEC via a funding agreement, also known as MRA. Currently enrolled families at voucher-funded ELFA programs can now fill out an interest form online: https://t.e2ma.net/click/6uznui/23f36eic/mvugzo

New families or families not currently enrolled:
New families in the 151–200% AMI range will be able to apply starting July 1, 2026. The online application will be available starting July 15, 2026 on https://www.sf.gov/early-learning-for-all

Q: What if an eligible family wants to enroll in an ELFA program before the application opens?

A: Families can enroll at any time, but the ELFA Half Tuition Credit will not take effect until July 1, 2026 at the earliest, and only after their application is approved. Families are responsible for full private-pay tuition until then. Retroactive credits for tuition paid before

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approval are not allowed. Providers are encouraged to inform prospective families of the upcoming credit so they can plan accordingly.

Q: Is the ELFA Half Tuition Credit a different program from ELFA?

A: No. The Half Tuition Credit is still part of ELFA. Families can only use this benefit at programs within the ELFA network — it cannot be used out-of-network.

Q: Can families apply for the new tier starting July 1?

A: For families currently attending in the ELFA network, they may fill out the Google form now. Wu Yee or Children's Council can begin the eligibility screening immediately. If they are eligible, they can start receiving the ELFA half-tuition credit beginning July 1, 2026.
For new families, they must apply through Wu Yee or Children's Council starting July 1, 2026, or apply online starting July 15, 2026.

Q: How long does it take to process the application for the new tier?

A: The process is fairly quick. If the family is eligible and the provider has space available, it does not take long.

Q: Is participation in the new Half Tuition Credit tier required for current ELFA providers?

A: No. Providers are not required to enroll families in the new Half Tuition Credit tier. There is no city obligation to extend enrollment in this new tier. However, if a currently enrolled family qualifies, providers are encouraged to at minimum connect them with Children's Council or Wu Yee if they choose not to activate the credit themselves.

Q: What is the ELFA Half Tuition Credit amount?

A: Qualifying families in the 151–200% AMI tier receive a credit equal to 50% of DEC's established ELFA reimbursement rate. For FY 26-27, that means: Infants — $1,514/month; Toddlers — $1,153/month; Preschool — $1,058/month. The credit is applied against DEC's reimbursement rate, which may not equal 50% of a program's private-pay tuition. Families are responsible for any remaining balance.

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Note: Example — if your private-pay infant rate is $3,000/month, DEC reimburses the program $1,514 (50% of the ELFA rate), and the family pays the $1,486 difference plus any additional fees.

Q: How does payment work — who pays what?

A: DEC reimburses the program directly (via Children's Council or Wu Yee voucher) for 50% of the applicable ELFA reimbursement rate. Families do not receive or handle this payment. Families pay the program directly for: (1) any remaining tuition balance above the DEC reimbursement, and (2) any additional fees for extended hours, meals, enrichment, late pickup, etc., as set by the program.

Q: How do I know if a family qualifies?

A: To qualify, a family must: (1) be a San Francisco resident, (2) have a child under age 5, and (3) have household income within an ELFA eligibility tier. For a family of four, the tiers are:

- ELFA Free Tuition (0–110% AMI): up to ~$171,450/year
- ELFA Full Tuition Credit (111–150% AMI): up to ~$233,800/year
- ELFA Half Tuition Credit (151–200% AMI): up to ~$311,700/year — new as of July 1, 2026

Thresholds vary by family size and are updated annually.

Link to AMI Table: https://www.sf.gov/eligibility-for-free-or-low-cost-preschool-and-child-care

Q: How is income calculated for parents receiving cash payments or self-employment income (such as Uber drivers)?
A: Wu Yee and Children's Council will ask families detailed questions and advise them on the required documentation. They are experienced in working with families in these situations.

Q: Is the income calculation the same as the state subsidy calculation?
A: It is very similar, but the income ceiling for state vouchers is different from ELFA. If a family does not qualify for a state voucher, Children's Council will check whether the

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family may qualify for ELFA. If they do, Children's Council will assist them with the ELFA application process.

Q: Are the 30-day provisional enrollment certifications also issued to families receiving the ELFA half-tuition credit?
A: Yes. The process remains the same as the current procedures.

Q: Is the following information appropriate to share with parents?
https://provider.sfdec.org/wp-content/uploads/ELFA-Family-Enrollment-Form-FY2025-2026_Chinese_Updated1.14.26-fillable.pdf (Chinese)

https://provider.sfdec.org/wp-content/uploads/ELFA-Family-Enrollment-Form-Spanish-FY-25-26-Final-v.2-fillable.pdf (Spanish)

https://provider.sfdec.org/wp-content/uploads/ELFA-Family-Enrollment-Form-English-FY-25-26-Final-v.3-fillable.pdf (English)
A: The form above is for MRA sites to use when enrolling new families and conducting eligibility screenings. If the family agrees to enroll in your program and they meet both the income and San Francisco residency requirements, your program may use the "Provider and Family Initiated Enrollment " form. A fully completed and signed form guarantees 30 days of childcare services and payment for those 30 days only.

Q: I heard that instead of waiting 12–15 days for payment, we'll now be paid within the first 5 business days of the month. Is that correct, and does it apply to all ELFA enrollment types?

A: Yes, that is correct. As of June 2026, all ELFA enrollments will be paid within the first five working days of the service month — not just the new Half Tuition Credit tier. This applies to all enrollment types, provided the enrollment certification form has been received.

Q: What happened to the monthly attendance sheets? What are "enrollment certification forms"?

A: The previous attendance record (sometimes called attendance sheets or ten-day counts) has been replaced by an enrollment certification form. By returning this form, providers certify that a child continues to be enrolled for the coming month. For example:

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returning the form in May confirms the child's enrollment for June, which triggers payment to the program in the first five days of June.

Note: Enrollment certification forms for the current cycle are due promptly. Providers with Children's Council vouchers should reach out immediately if they have not yet received their forms.

Q: Are we paid the full monthly rate or is it prorated by attendance?

A: Payment follows existing ELFA payment policies. Providers receive the full monthly rate unless the program is closed for more than the 15 closure days allowed under the operating guidelines.

Summary of Other Feedback & Questions

The following themes reflect questions and feedback raised during the webinar that fall outside the direct scope of the 200% AMI expansion and ELFA Enroll pay process. We are taking this feedback back to the DEC team for review and follow-up.

► Provider Fees, Co-pays & Late Pickup Charges

► Absence & Attendance Policy

► Provider Incentives for Serving Free Tuition Families

► Care Hour Requirements & Schedule Equity

► Income Verification Practices

► Program Capacity, Facility Development & Reimbursement Rate Sustainability

► Program Closure Days Allowances