

The One-Minute Cliff

How a single minute of attendance can cost a child care program \$434 for one infant in one month.

1 The daily rate depends on one minute

Subsidy pays a full-time daily rate when a child attends more than four hours. At exactly four hours or less, the day is paid at the part-time rate. For an infant in a 5-star center, that one-minute difference looks like this:

Attends 4 hours, 1 minute

\$50.60

Full-time day

Attends 4 hours, 0 minutes

\$30.40

Part-time day (-\$20.20)

2 The monthly cliff makes it far worse

When a child attends **at least 16 full-time days** in a month, the program earns the monthly full-time rate of **\$1,223**. If even one of those days falls short by a single minute, the child drops below 16 full-time days, and the month is paid day by day instead.

Scenario	How it's calculated	Program earns
16 full-time days	Monthly full-time rate	\$1,223.00
15 full-time days + 1 part-time day	$(15 \times \$50.60) + (1 \times \$30.40)$	\$789.40
Difference caused by one minute		-\$433.60

One minute on one day reduces the month's payment for this child by about **35%**.

-\$434

3 Why this matters

- **The cost of care doesn't change.** The infant still needs the same teacher, the same classroom, and the same ratio coverage whether they stay four hours or four hours and one minute.
- **Programs don't control the clock.** A late drop-off, an early pickup for a doctor's visit, or a delayed check-out entry can push a day under the line.
- **Losses multiply.** The same cliff applies to every subsidized child, every month, making revenue unpredictable for programs already operating on thin margins.