



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

March 30, 2020

COVID-19: Illinois' Early Childhood Care and Education Response

Keeping children and providers safe while supporting families' child care options

The health and well-being of Illinois' children, families, and our early childhood care and education providers is of utmost importance. In response to the unprecedented public health emergency that Illinois is facing as a result of the spread of COVID-19, the Governor's Office and our state agency partners have suspended or amended policies to ensure the health and safety of providers and to provide financial support for providers. We have developed and shared guidance to not only support our child care and early learning community but also to ensure that care is provided for the children of essential workers throughout the state of Illinois.

Establishment of new rules for child care centers and homes operating during the emergency:

- Early education programs in public and private schools are required to remain closed while K-12 schools are closed.
- As of March 20, 2020, licensed and license-exempt child care centers and licensed and license-exempt homes are required to close their existing programs for the duration of the Governor's disaster proclamation.
- Effective March 21, 2020 and for as long as the public health emergency continues, child care homes (including licensed homes that have closed their existing program) may serve up to six children of [essential workers](#) as a legally license-exempt home. No application or registration is required.
- On March 23, 2020, Governor Pritzker amended the "Stay at Home" Executive Order to allow [certain license-exempt child care centers](#) to provide care for the children of [essential workers](#) without needing to apply for an Emergency Child Care License during the COVID-19 State of Emergency.
- Licensed child care centers seeking to re-open as Emergency Child Care Centers are required to go through an application process through the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The application is available [here](#), and should be submitted to Emergency.Daycare@illinois.gov. More information is available in the guidance document [here](#).
- License-exempt child care homes, license-exempt child care centers, and Emergency Child Care Centers serving essential workers will be the only child care centers legally allowed to operate during the COVID-19 state of emergency; all programs are encouraged to [contact the Child Care Resource and Referral \(CCR&R\) system](#) to track the availability of care throughout the state.
- In both license-exempt and Emergency Child Care Center settings, children must be cared for in stable groups of ten children or fewer.
- [Guidelines were developed](#) for caring for children in group settings, including children with disabilities or other special needs.
- The timeline to complete various training requirements for workers in child care programs is being extended by 90 days so that programs can focus on providing care.
- Centers and homes with licenses due for renewal before June 30 have been granted a 90 day extension of their license.

Financial support for Emergency Child Care providers:

- All licensed Emergency Child Care Centers, license-exempt centers, and licensed homes providing care as license-exempt during the emergency are eligible to receive a stipend to offset some of the additional costs providers may incur during the emergency. Stipends are:
 - Family child care homes* OR \$ 750.00
 - Family child care homes* providing 2nd and/or 3rd shift child care \$1,000.00
 - Child care centers with up to two (2) classrooms \$2,000.00
 - Child care centers with 3-5 classrooms \$3,000.00
- The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is developing a process to allow Priority Essential Workers (health care, human services, and essential government services) to categorically qualify for CCAP during the period of the emergency.

Financial support for existing child care and early learning programs:

- IDHS has developed a simplified waiver process for the 80% attendance requirement for CCAP so programs can be paid for all eligible days of care. The policy and form are available [here](#). It is also [available in Spanish](#). Providers submitting the waiver must attest that they have continued to pay their staff through each month for which they submit the waiver.
- Early education programs funded through the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE's) Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative programs have been advised their funding will not be affected by a decision to close in response to the public health emergency. In addition, the Governor signed an Executive Order allowing Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative funding to be used to meet the child care and related needs of non-enrolled children of essential workers.
- On Monday, March 23, 2020, IDHS and the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) hosted a webinar for 3,000 attendees: [COVID-19 Child Care Business Practices and Resources](#).
- GOECD continues to study the impact of the federal relief packages on small businesses like child care centers and will continue to link providers with resources to ensure that they are able to take maximum advantage of these federal benefits.

To keep families and the early childhood care and education community informed:

- The [GOECD COVID-19 for Early Childhood](#) webpage is being updated daily with links to the most up-to-date resources for children, families, and early childhood care and education providers.
- GOECD also launched a [COVID-19 Emergency Child Care for Communities & Providers](#) webpage with resources to help communities develop emergency child care options for essential workers.
- GOECD, DCFS, IDHS, and ISBE have developed [guidance for child care centers, child care homes, and early education programs](#). This guidance is also [available in Spanish](#).
- GOECD, DCFS, IDHS, and ISBE also developed COVID-19 [frequently asked questions following the mandatory closure of all child care centers and homes](#). These FAQs are also [available in Spanish](#).
- GOECD also developed [Emergency Child Care FAQs](#) to answer many of the questions being submitted from the field. A system for regularly developing and publishing these FAQs to support the needs of early care and education providers is in development.
- On March 21, 2020, GOECD issued a [COVID-19 Letter to Families](#) explaining the impact of Governor Pritzker's Executive Order on child care and early learning programs in Illinois.
- A dedicated help line has been created so Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) can help connect essential worker families to emergency child care: toll-free (888) 228-1146. The helpline will be available from 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM Monday through Friday to answer calls, but callers will be able to leave a message 24 hours a day.

- To find emergency care in their community, essential workers can utilize the [COVID-19 Emergency Provider Search](#).
- Individuals with questions about child care related responses to COVID-19 are being directed to email GOV.OECD@illinois.gov.

Nutrition support for children while schools are closed:

- ISBE has obtained the USDA waiver to provide meals to all children under age 18 during school closures, including children under five. Families should call their local public school for more information.
- ISBE has also issued [guidance](#) to providers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program about how they can continue to provide nutritional assistance to families.

To increase the availability of child care for essential workers:

- To expedite the enrollment process, new enrollees in child care programs will have a 30 day grace period to submit a physical and immunization form, birth certificate, and other forms that are typically required prior to enrollment.
- An [Emergency Child Care Staffing Survey](#) was developed so qualified individuals can volunteer to temporarily work in an Emergency Child Care Home or Center.
- The [COVID-19 Emergency Child Care for Communities & Providers](#) webpage was developed to provide communities with resources to help them develop child care options for essential workers.

Support for families who receive Early Intervention services:

- To support the health and well-being of staff, children, and families, IDHS has discontinued all face-to-face services until April 15, 2020.
- Since Illinois Early Intervention does not have an approved method of teletherapy in place, [guidance has been developed](#) for how early interventionists can maintain interaction with families and continue to provide support.

Support for families who receive home visits:

- To support the health and well-being of staff, children, and families, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV), IDHS, and ISBE have suspended home visits until further notice.
- Guidance has been provided to staff to offer visits to families over the phone or via FaceTime/Skype.

We understand we are facing challenging times, and in order to support the needs of children, families, and early childhood care and education providers, we are tirelessly working to identify and implement policies, practices, and guidance to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and keep all Illinois residents informed.