

Child Care NEWS BRIEF

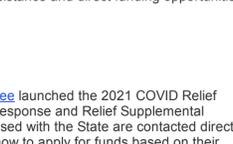


Child Care Services Newsletter

Greetings from your partners at the TN Department of Human Services, Child Care Services Team!

Welcome to the April edition of the Child Care Services Newsletter. These newsletters are a method of providing on-going communication to further enhance our growing partnership. The focus of this Newsletter will be an update on activities related to transformation as well as new financial supports, on-going financial supports, and resources to assist you in your work.

Grants, Resources, and Supports



It is an exciting time to be in Child and Early Education! There has been a tremendous shift in supporting the early care system through unprecedented federal funding. In addition to Child Care and Development Funding (CCDF), states have been awarded funding due to impacts from the global COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, Tennessee received funds through the CARES Act. This funding launched temporary Pandemic/Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance, contracts providing temporary care for school-aged children of essential workers, as well as Disaster/Emergency Response & Recovery Grants. Tennessee expended all CARES Act dollars for these supports. In February, Tennessee received a federal award for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA) Funds. These funds are being utilized to further extend Pandemic/Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance and direct funding opportunities for providers through the 2021 COVID Relief Grants.

2021 COVID Relief Grants Update

The Department, in partnership with [Childcare Tennessee](#) launched the 2021 COVID Relief Grants in April, which are funded by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA). Child care providers licensed with the State are contacted directly by Childcare Tennessee and are given instructions on how to apply for funds based on their capacity through this simplified process.

The first round for Family/Group Home providers has been completed. There were 561 eligible Family/Group Home providers contacted and of this number, 356 responded and have been approved. The second round for small centers closed on Wednesday, April 28. There were 793 eligible centers in this round. This contact and distribution process will continue depending on licensed capacity.

- Round 1 Family/Group Homes
- Round 2 Small Centers (up to 75 capacity)
- Round 3 Centers (76 to 150 capacity)
- Round 4 Centers (151 to 225 capacity)
- Round 5 Centers (226 + capacity)

These grant awards will support eligible expenditures including but not limited to:

- Cleaning and sanitation
- Increased operating expenses such as salaries, insurance, rent, and personal protective equipment

The American Rescue Plan Act has awarded states with funding to support direct services to families as well as supports to stabilize the child care industry and increase capacity. We have reached out to you in various forums including focus group sessions (CCDF 2022-2024 State Plan), surveys and general discussions to assess needs. As we await additional guidance from our federal partners, Administration for Child & Families, Office of Child Care, we are developing strategies based on identified needs and stabilization efforts. We will continue to communicate with you as these exciting opportunities are made available.

Enhancement Grants

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS), in partnership with [Childcare Tennessee](#), is continuing to accept applications for grants to increase capacity, strengthen quality and/or promote compliance with licensing standards that support improved child outcomes in early childhood education and enhance child care agency programs. Any child care agency licensed by TDHS may apply for a Child Support and Enhancement Grant in any amount up to \$4,000.00. Agencies located in economically distressed counties identified in Governor Lee's Executive Order No.1 may apply for a grant up to \$5,000.00 (**Bledsoe, Clay, Cocke, Grundy, Hancock, Hardeman, Lake, Lauderdale, Perry, Scott and Wayne counties**).

In our recent survey, child care providers said they would like help with purchasing items such as: playground equipment, refrigerator-freezer, chairs, furniture, book shelves, tables, or vacuum cleaners. These are the types of items that Enhancement Grant funds can be used to purchase.

For more details and to apply, please [Click Here to visit The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, Inc.](#) website or [Click Here to visit the Childcare Tennessee Portal.](#)

Small Business Administration Loan and Grant Programs

Below is the link to several resources for Early Care and Education programs for Small Business loan supports available to centers and family home providers.

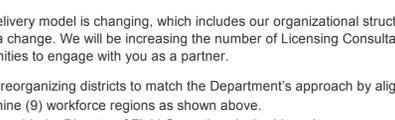
Small Business Administration Loan and Grant Programs:

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/early-care-and-education-providers-taking-advantage-new-small-business-administration-loan-and-grant>

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is a forgivable loan program to help very small businesses, such as child care programs, with much needed financial support during these unprecedented times. **The application period for PPP loans is extended to May 31, 2021, for all businesses, but program funding may run out before then.**

Child Care 2020 Disaster Grant Survey Results Are In!

We would like to thank all who participated in the Child Care 2020 Disaster Grant Survey that was provided in the last Newsletter edition. We asked to hear your perspective on strategies to deploy the funds Tennessee is receiving through the American Rescue Plan Act and how these funds can further support our child care provider community. Based on the responses received, the two biggest challenges are staffing and cash flow.



As the Department continues exploring strategies that will meet these needs as well as on-going stability, additional considerations will include a streamlined application process that is user friendly and easy, including technical supports to provide assistance for how to apply.

QRIS Redesign Update

As we continue our transformation journey, updates will be provided on the progress. As a reminder, our *QUALITY care for children and adults* is grounded in our "WHY Statement" - *Every family should have access to QUALITY care for children and adults*. This basic statement guides all our work and reinforces our three primary goals for Tennessee's child care system: **Improve Quality, Increase Access, and Strengthen Business Efficiency.**

A big part of our transformation is based in redesigning our Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), which was launched 20 years ago. When launched in 2001, Tennessee's Star Quality Program was one of the first child care quality rating programs in the country. Over the years, this program has significantly helped to raise awareness about the importance of quality child care and has assisted many agencies in improving their programming. By redesigning the quality assessment and rating program, Tennessee will again be a pioneer in supporting quality early care and education. You have been a part of envisioning this future state through focus group sessions and information captured through routine engagements.

Customer Experience

With this program and staff reorganization, the most meaningful indicators of quality will be measured on a consistent basis by licensing staff. Providers will experience those staff members as partners in supporting quality care for children and families. Redesigning the QRIS, coupled with systems modernization and adjusting how we do business to better serve child care providers and families, guides us on our next steps in transformation, which is reorganizing the TDHS child care team to match the future state of child care services in Tennessee.

Staff Reorganization

The Child Care Services Division is under a general restructure to facilitate our philosophy of building relationships and meaningful engagement with our customers. Included below is an update on the new organizational structure.

Tennessee Workforce Regions

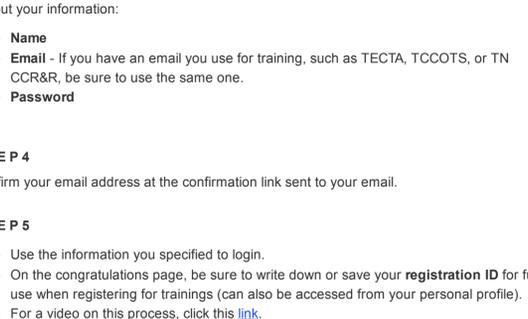


What will be different?

Our service delivery model is changing, which includes our organizational structure. This means you may see a change. We will be increasing the number of Licensing Consultants to provide more opportunities to engage with you as a partner.

- We are reorganizing districts to match the Department's approach by aligning with the state's nine (9) workforce regions as shown above.
- We have added a Director of Field Operations in the Licensing program who will continue to promote consistency in practices. We are pleased to announce that this position has been filled with the promotion of **Kim Whitehead** to serve in this role.
- There will be five (5) Regional Managers across the state who will directly support 20 Field Supervisors. We are very excited to announce the following staff who have assumed the roles of Regional Manager and their respective areas based on the District mapping.
 - **Anita Green** - Greater Memphis Area
 - **Eugenia London** - Northwest/Southwest/Southern Middle
 - **Sue Camplin** - Northern Middle
 - **John Sanders** - Southeast/Upper Cumberland
 - **Allison Miller** - East/Northeast
- Current Licensing and Assessment functions are merging into one larger Licensing program. There will be 122 Licensing Consultants (formerly known as Program Evaluators) statewide. The interview process for existing staff has reached completion on April 28, 2021, and recommendations for these roles was made to our Human Resources Department.
- The Pre-Licensure Unit will work with programs seeking applicants to explain expectations, answer questions, identify resources, and helps applicants navigate the licensure process. We are very happy to announce that **Cynthia Roberts** will be leading this unit. There are six (6) Program Specialists that will assist new agencies with technical support, resources, training and guidance to promote a strong foundation for on-going stability, quality and a success.

Meet the Team - Pre-Licensure Unit



Cynthia Roberts, Pre-Licensure Manager
 Rachel Peters, Pre-Licensure Specialist
 Kalli McNeal, Pre-Licensure Specialist
 Wendy Pasch, Pre-Licensure Specialist
 Rachel Reinhardt-Mpangi, Pre-Licensure Specialist
 Margo Mathis, Pre-Licensure Specialist
 Rachel Pogue, Pre-Licensure Specialist

- Child Care Certificate Program will include a Customer Response Team to support families and providers.
- Over the next two months, TDHS Child Care Services staff will be transitioning into these new roles. Throughout this transition, staff will continue serving providers and families. Licensing Consultants should be reaching out to individual providers beginning in June to make introductions and begin fostering partnership relationships.

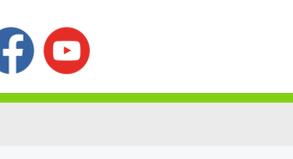
Legislation

The Legislation that supports this vision and the QRIS redesign has passed and is awaiting the Governor's signature. We want to make you aware of some components of the bill:

- The bill streamlines the process for providers and removes burdensome regulation such as an annual licensure fee.
- Supports a new framework that collects on-going data throughout the year instead of a one-time quality review.
- Provides targeted, relationship-based quality improvement coaching and connects to necessary resources.
- Provides financial supports to support quality improvement.
- Recognizes Early Childhood Education program quality that is defined by the strongest predictors of child outcomes.

Consistent with final legislation, TDHS will continue to engage providers through the rule making process and focus groups to inform this future state. We will keep you informed as these new components go into effect.

TNPAL Update



The Tennessee Department of Human Services launched the Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL), a free online resource to better support professional development for early childhood professionals working in TDHS-licensed child care agencies. The Department will continue to move toward utilizing TNPAL as the system of record for child care educators and administrative staff. We encourage you to begin familiarization with the system as we transition fully with the launch of the new QRIS system.

TNPAL is a single web-based location designed to collect and preserve completed trainings, accomplishments, credentials, education, certifications, and awards. These features and functions empower not only early childhood professionals but also support verification by directors and TDHS. Child care agency directors are encouraged to support TNPAL registration for all program employees.

Signing up is easy! Early childhood professionals may create a TNPAL account using a web browser on any computer, phone, or tablet. Follow the steps below to set up your account today.

How to Register for TNPAL

- STEP 1**
Navigate to tnpal.org.
- STEP 2**
Click "Start Now" on the home page.
- STEP 3**
Fill out your information:
 - **Name**
 - **Email** - If you have an email you use for training, such as TECTA, TCCOTS, or TN CCR&R, be sure to use the same one.
 - **Password**
- STEP 4**
Confirm your email address at the confirmation link sent to your email.
- STEP 5**
 - Use the information you specified to login.
 - On the congratulations page, be sure to write down or save your **registration ID** for future use when registering for trainings (can also be accessed from your personal profile).
 - For a video on this process, click this [link](#).
- STEP 6**
Fill in your employment, education, certifications, credentials, and community service info.
- STEP 7**
Request association in TNPAL with your child care agency.

You are now registered for TNPAL!

How to Manage TNPAL As a Director

As a Director, you will be able to link educators who have registered for TNPAL to your agency. It is important that once educators reach a role to connect to your agency, you approve or deny the request if they are no longer an employee. Follow the steps below to manage the approvals for the educators in your agency.

- STEP 1**
Navigate to tnpal.org and Login to your account.
- STEP 2**
Make sure that you have been navigating as a director for your center. You can request this role when adding your employment by navigating to **My Profile** from the sidebar and selecting the **Employment** tab.
- STEP 3**
Educators who sign up via TNPAL will also need to specify and request their role as an **Educator** for your center on this same tab when adding their employment.
- STEP 4**
Once approved as a director, navigate to the **Director Dashboard** by clicking the **Silhouette Icon** in the top right of the screen and selecting Director from the drop-down menu.
- STEP 5**
From the Director Dashboard, you can click on the **Requests** button to approve or deny association requests from educators. You can also manage existing roles by selecting the **Staff Management** button.

For a video on this process, click this [link](#).

Our partners at CCR&R and TECTA have started reaching out to each TDHS-licensed child care. Both the CCR&R and TECTA will continue to contact you over the next several months to provide guided registration support and assist directors with registering your staff.

Additional TNPAL tutorial videos can be found [here](#).

TDHS is committed to promoting early childhood environments that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich. Thank you for offering Tennessee families learning opportunities and environments that will help their children thrive.

Find helpful videos and news to build strong Tennessee families when you follow [@TNHumanServices](#).

