

Child Care Services Daily Update – June 2, 2020

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) will continue to provide you with the most current information pertaining to Child Care programs. We will continue to remain diligent in keeping this site current.

Guidance for Child Care Providers:

Now, as always, child care providers play a critical role in their communities, particularly for parents who work in the health care industry or other essential roles. Each child care provider must make the decision whether to be open or closed, based on their unique situation and the needs in their community.

For child care providers who are currently open or are seeking to reopen, the Tennessee Departments of Human Services and Education are recommending that programs [follow CDC guidance for child care programs that remain open](#). The Departments are also providing additional guidance to child care facilities throughout the state on proactive measures, including screening recommendations for staff and visitors. These proactive measures are intended to help limit the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard children, families, and child care provider staff.

- **Limiting Persons in the Facility:** Providers should prohibit persons from the facility with the exceptions of:
 - Facility staff
 - Persons with a legal authority to enter, including law enforcement officers, child care licensing staff, and Child Protective Services staff
 - Professionals providing services to children
 - Children enrolled at the facility
 - Parents or legal guardians who have children enrolled and present at the facility
- **Pick-up and Drop-Off Protocols:** Pick-up and drop-off should occur outside the facility, unless it is determined that there is a legitimate need for the parent to enter a facility. Hand hygiene stations should be set up at the entrance of the facility, with supervised use. Consider staggering arrival and drop off times and/or have staff come outside the facility to pick up the children as they arrive.
- **Screening:** Persons who have a fever of 100.4⁰ (38.0⁰C) or above or other signs of illness should not be admitted to the facility. Encourage parents to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick. Screen staff and children upon arrival, if possible. Require staff to report any illness to their supervisor and require notification of COVID-19 positive case in employee's household. Examples of screening methods are available in the [CDC Guidance](#).
- **Limiting Class Sizes and Mixing:** All efforts should be made to limit congregation of children and class sizes to 10 or less.

- **Groupings should include, to the extent possible, the same children each day to minimize exposure**
- Limit the mixing of children, such as staggering playground times and keeping groups separate for special activities such as art, music, and exercising. Clean or disinfect equipment between groups, when possible.
- **Face Masks:** When feasible, staff members and older children should [wear face coverings](#) within the facility as recommended by the CDC. Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under age two because of the danger of suffocation. Consider explanations to assist children with understanding why staff are wearing face coverings, as appropriate.
- **Do not allow sick children to be cared for in the facility:** If a child becomes sick while at the facility, contact the parent or guardian immediately and separate the child from other children at the facility. Make sure emergency contact information is current.
- **Have a plan if someone is or becomes sick.**
 - Plan to have an isolation room or area (such as a cot in a corner of the classroom) that can be used to isolate a sick child. Additional information about isolation in related settings can be found here: [isolation at home](#) and [isolation in healthcare settings](#).
 - Be ready to follow CDC guidance on how to [disinfect your building or facility](#) if someone is sick.
 - If a sick child has been isolated in your facility, clean and disinfect surfaces in your isolation room or area after the sick child has gone home.
 - Send staff home if they become sick with COVID-19-like symptoms. Evaluate leave policies to accommodate the provisions of these guidelines. Covered employers and employees should be aware of the provisions of the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which allows for paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons, such as for self-quarantining or seeking a medical diagnosis for COVID-19 symptoms.
 - If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member:
 - Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
 - Wait up to 24 hours or as long as possible before you clean or disinfect to allow respiratory droplets to settle before cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
 - If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - Do not permit the child or staff member to return to the facility except as recommended by the child or staff member's medical provider.

For more details and recommendations, please refer to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#), which covers topics such as:

- Social Distancing

- Child pick up and drop off procedures
- Cleaning and disinfecting toys and bedding
- Safely caring for infants and toddlers
- Food preparation and meal service
- Talking with children about COVID-19

Contact your Program Evaluator

As providers begin to reopen pursuant to federal, state and local regulations, the departments request the provider **contact their Program Evaluator** to keep them informed of the agency's status. Program Evaluators will be able to explain how monitoring and compliance will be determined for the immediate future, and can discuss any continuing challenges and impacts the provider may face to better inform the department on the needs of the child care community going forward.

During these extraordinary times, Program Evaluators are supporting providers during weekly calls to provide guidance and clarification on continued best practices to ensure safe, healthy and educationally rich environments for the children in Tennessee. These frequent touchpoints are also a continued source of information for providers in better understanding department programs which offer assistance to providers suffering financially as a result of tornados or COVID-19 pandemic.

Please note: This information is available on our website: <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/covid-19/child-care-services-and-covid-19.html>

Reminder: Additional Clarification When Applying for Operational Costs through the COVID-19 Relief Grant

As we continue to explore opportunities to support child care agencies and families during this public health emergency, we want to provide additional clarification on existing resources that are available.

The Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance program is for the period of April 15, 2020 through August 21, 2020. When a family is approved for this child care category, we will back date the certificate authorizing care if the child was attending effective April 15th or will begin the Certificate after that date for the child with the actual date of enrollment if after April 15th. We understand that you may have already filed for the Disaster/Emergency Grant Operational Cost category. Under this category you may apply for the cost difference above the State Reimbursement Rates.

We will provide you with additional information on how to recoup the cost difference above the maximum State Rate so that you may refund or credit the family approved under the Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance program if you have already applied for the Disaster/Emergency Grant

for Operational Costs for April. Additional guidance will be made available during the month of June to provide information on how to reconcile this cost difference through the grant application.

Many families have lost employment or have been subject to lay-offs during this time and are struggling to pay above the State Reimbursement Rates. This is causing some families to withdraw their child from the licensed care program. We certainly want to avoid this from happening so the family may retain their child's slot. The COVID-19 operations costs relief grant allows you to apply for costs associated with operating under the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand there may be a "cost difference" above the maximum state rate that families are required by your policy to pay. We ask that you apply for this "cost difference" amount under the operations cost category. This will provide relief for the family and support you in recouping that revenue.

The stipulation under this grant, is that once the money is received, if you have already charged and received payment from the parent, you refund or credit their accounts. If you have not received payment from the family, this grant amount will cover the full cost of care for children enrolled through subsidy.

Please Note: There is a new method implemented for agencies to learn the status of their grant applications or ask specific questions about the application in process. Community Foundations of Middle Tennessee has created one easy form for you to complete. This enables a quick feedback process and routes your request into one easy system so that everyone gets an answer in an orderly manner. Please allow adequate processing time before requesting a status update.

Early applicants received a pop-up when applications are completed. The process is now improved:

1. An email is received upon submission of the application.
2. An email is received when the application is approved by DHS field supervisors and sent to the next processing step.
3. An email is received when the application is sent to DHS for invoicing. There are several steps between invoice and receipt of funds by your agency.

Submit any status requests about Support and Enhancement Grants and Disaster/Emergency Grants to <https://childcareoftennesseeillc.formstack.com/forms/helpdesk> and you will be provided this feedback form to complete for a status response.

Learn about grant opportunities and apply online by visiting www.childcaretennessee.com.