

Child Care Services Daily Update – July 27, 2020

Virtual Monitoring and Temporary Program Assessment Procedures

The Tennessee Department of Human Services is committed to supporting child care agencies in providing programs that are safe, healthy and educationally rich. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges and many opportunities to approach delivery of our services in different ways. Monitoring visits were suspended through Executive Order while we closely examined the very fluid and ever-evolving impact of this pandemic on our communities across the state.

We are pleased to announce that we will be resuming monitoring visits with licensed child care agencies beginning the week of July 27, 2020. It is our goal to remain sensitive to the continued impact of the pandemic on your operations. We have developed an approach that will minimize exposure and satisfy regular monitoring visits and re-evaluations that support licensure renewal. We are providing an overview of how these visits will be conducted. Prior to scheduling a visit your licensing Program Evaluator will contact you with detailed information on how to prepare and a packet will be sent to you on what to expect.

Monitoring Visits

The Department has developed a non-invasive approach for resuming regularly scheduled visits that will minimize the risk of exposure for you, your team, the children in your care and our staff. This approach will incorporate a hybrid model of desk audits and a virtual visit conducted electronically. All visits will be announced and scheduled ahead of time to minimize any disruption to your program. Your licensing Program Evaluator will contact you to schedule this virtual visit and discuss with you how best to prepare. Additionally, you will be provided with information that must be submitted as part of the desk audit prior to the virtual visit. Agencies that were scheduled for routine monitoring visits during the period of March 2020 through July 2020 and had an annual licensure re-evaluation due will complete the annual renewal in lieu of a routine visit.

Re-evaluations/License Renewals

The Department will begin scheduling annual re-evaluation virtual visits the week of July 27, 2020 for those agencies whose license has expired or will be expiring within the next few months. We will prioritize the visits beginning with agencies with expired/extended licensed form March and moving forward to present. The annual re-evaluation visit will be conducted using the same hybrid model of desk audit and virtual visit. Your licensing Program Evaluator will contact you to schedule this virtual visit and review the documents necessary for the desk audit portion. Please note that the annual re-

evaluation will be more involved and will require additional time to complete. This is similar to the time you would normally commit to prepare for and participate in your annual re-evaluation monitoring visit.

Annual Report Card/Program Assessment

As you know, the Department has been on a journey of transformation to redesign the current Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in Tennessee. Several of you participated in focus groups to provide feedback on these big ideas. The impact of the pandemic has created the immediate need to revisit the Assessment Component of the Report Card more quickly, to allow for a temporary alternate solution to the current Assessment tool. The current tool requires certain criteria to be in place for validity. Due to the unique circumstances that have altered normal operations that criteria cannot be met. The Program Assessment component of the Annual Report Card was suspended through Executive Order much like the other monitoring visits. The Department will continue to monitor the component areas of the Report Card through the hybrid approach of desk audit, virtual visit and interview process. We have developed a method to evaluate program enrichment (quality) that is non-invasive and captures the requirements under the Assessment component area through a temporary Assessment Instrument.

To maximize efficiency of staff operations and to minimize disruption of child care agency operations and health exposure, Child Care Licensing Staff will use this temporary instrument as part of their annual licensing/report card evaluation. It is an objective tool and everyone will be able to read and refer to the guidance and examples provided within the Assessment Instrument document. This tool will be applied to all age levels served at the agency and will apply to at least 50% of the classrooms in each licensed agency. For example, if the agency has six (6) classrooms, three (3) will be selected and the Licensing Program Evaluator will conduct interviews with the educator and/or director in order to validate whether elements meet the scoring component within the chart/rubric.

Item/ Element Categories

An agency will be scored in one of four Item/Element Categories. The agency will choose which Item/Element Category will be applied to all the classrooms scored at that agency. The four Item/Element Categories that the agency will choose from include:

- National Accreditation
- Curriculum/Daily Planning
- Developmental Assessment (This component is used for classrooms serving infant through preschool ages only.)
- Emergent Literacy and Language

The temporary Assessment Instrument is included in this communication for your review. We will provide further explanation as your Licensing Program Evaluator calls to schedule your virtual visit. Your



Licensing Program Evaluator will be using this tool to evaluate your selected Item/Element category and score this component area as they are scoring the other component areas of the Report Card.

An introductory training on the Assessment Instrument will be offered through Child Care Resource & Referral. The training is designed as a one-hour session and will be available through virtual learning. Please follow the [link](#) to register for a session as each session will be limited to 200 participants.

Introduction to the New Assessment Instrument - Training Dates and Times

7/29, Wednesday at 5:30 pm CST/6:30 pm EST
7/30, Thursday at 11:30 am CST/12:30 om EST
8/5, Wednesday at 11:30 am CST/12:30 om EST
8/12, Wednesday at 5:30 pm CST/6:30 pm EST
8/19, Wednesday at 5:30 pm CST/6:30 pm EST
8/26, Wednesday at 11:30 am CST/12:30 om EST

Requested Re-Assessments

If you requested a Re-Assessment and we were not able to complete due to the impact of the pandemic, you may still receive a Re-Assessment using the temporary Assessment Instrument. You will not be charged for a Re-Assessment as we are unable to provide a redetermination using the same tool that was used to previously assess your program. If you have already paid for a Re-Assessment, we will work with you to refund any amount paid. The Department will reach out to you to schedule your Re-Assessment using the new tool and the hybrid approach.

Response and Recovery Technical Assistance

The impact of the pandemic has created many challenges over the past several months. The Department has worked to develop financial supports, technical assistance and resources to alleviate some of the economic impact and instability the pandemic has caused. We have created a Response and Recovery Technical Assistance team that will be available to provide more detailed information, guidance and toolkits on how to access the necessary supports and resources to help with sustainability moving forward. As your licensing Program Evaluator is conducting monitoring visits, the opportunity to refer to the Response and Recovery TA team to provide additional support will be available. Areas where you may wish to have additional support may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Social distancing strategies
- Cleaning and disinfecting
- Parent drop-off and pick up
- Caring for infants and toddlers



- Food preparation and Meal Service
- Infectious Diseases Reporting Requirement
- Grant Assistance
- Low attendance
- Difficulty in classroom management due to changes in groupings
- Difficulty in implementing DAP due to changes in groupings
- Difficulty in supervision
- Difficulty in positive teacher/child interactions
- Difficulty in daily health practices, hand washing, sanitizing
- Coordination of consultants to address stress, anxiety and grief

Thank you for the incredible and important work that you are doing in your communities to care for children and serve families. We appreciate your perseverance and your dedication to providing child care services that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich. We are grateful to partner with you in this critical mission.