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March 20, 2020

## **COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions Following the Mandatory Closure of All Child Care Centers and Homes**

### **Q: K-12 schools are closed. Are child care facilities (home and center based) required to close as well?**

Early education programs in public and private schools are also required to close while the K-12 schools are closed. As of March 21, 2020 licensed and license-exempt child care centers and licensed and license-exempt homes have been required to close as well.

### **Q. I want to continue to support children and families during this public health emergency. Will there be an option for me to reopen? Will any exceptions to the normal licensing process be made?**

Child care is a critical emergency service that is necessary for the children of essential workers currently required to work to maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Illinois. Emergency Child Care centers will be the **only** child care centers legally allowed to operate during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. Emergency Child Care Centers may be located in: schools; community-based organizations such as churches and social services organizations; or health care facilities or other workplaces for critical emergency workers.

Effective March 21, 2020 and for as long as the public health emergency continues, child care homes may serve up to six children as a legally license-exempt home. No application or registration is required. Providers must follow appropriate health practices. Providers who are in a higher risk group for COVID-19, such as those over age 60 or with a pre-existing health condition, are discouraged from providing care during the time of the public health emergency.

All proposed Emergency Child Care Centers are required to go through an application process, including programs currently licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

If you are not sure whether you are prepared to begin the process of opening an Emergency Child Care Center, please contact DCFS Licensing at 1-877-746-0829 or 312-328-2464 to speak with an DCFS Licensing staff member that can assist and answer questions.

### **Q. What is the process for becoming an Emergency Child Care Center?**

Programs that apply to become an Emergency Child Care Center to continue to serve children during the COVID-19 State of Emergency must go through the following process:

1. Complete an Emergency Child Care Center License application. If your center has been previously licensed, you may then begin operations under a five-day grace period. If not, you will need to wait for a DCFS site visit.

- a. Application for an Emergency Child Care License is available at:  
<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/CFS%20597%20Application%20for%20Child%20Care%20Facility%20License.doc>
  - b. The DCFS Authorization for Background Check for Child Care is available at:  
<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/CFS%20718-B%20Authorization%20for%20Background%20Check%20for%20Child%20Care.docx>
  - c. A Quick Reference of Rules for Emergency Child Care Centers can be found:  
<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/Quick%20Reference%20of%20Rules%20for%20Emergency%20Child%20Care%20Centers.pdf>
  - d. All completed applications can be submitted to DCFS at  
[Emergency.Daycare@illinois.gov](mailto:Emergency.Daycare@illinois.gov).
2. Alert the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) that you will begin operations (phone number and website forthcoming).
  3. If you are a program serving primarily low-income families and would like to apply for a grant to support operations, connect with one of the following entities:
    - a. For programs who currently have a contract with the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services, contact them.
    - b. For all other programs, contact your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency.
  4. Receive contact from DCFS. If you have never operated a licensed or license-exempt child care center at this site before, or if you have operated a licensed or license-exempt child care center at this site and have *not* received a DCFS site visit in the past 12 months, DCFS will conduct a site visit.
  5. DCFS will recommend a program for approval and will issue an approval letter.
  6. DCFS will conduct a follow-up visit.

*More specific IDCFS guidance is under development and will be forthcoming.*

**Q. How long will it take to become an Emergency Child Care Center and resume operation?**

Upon submission of an Emergency Child Care License application, Emergency Child Care Centers may resume operations for the children of essential workers only under a five-day grace period while awaiting emergency license approval from DCFS.

**Q. If I apply to become an Emergency Child Care Center, how many children can I serve?**

Emergency Child Care Centers that receive this new emergency license can serve 10 or fewer children in one room and may not move children between rooms; this is to help maximize social distancing. Only children of critical emergency workers are eligible to be served in Emergency Child Care Centers.

**Q. Will all Illinois families be able to receive ongoing child care, or are there qualifications for families who can receive care at an Emergency Child Care Program?**

No, only the children of parents or guardians who are essential workers can receive care at an Emergency Child Care Program. The list of essential workers eligible to access child care through an Emergency Child Care Program is the same as the definition of Essential Workers available on the State of Illinois Coronavirus Response website ([coronavirus.illinois.gov](https://coronavirus.illinois.gov)).

*For Programs That Remain Closed*

**Q: Since child care closures have been mandated due to the public health emergency, will I continue to be paid through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) or the Early Childhood Block Grant?**

Yes. IDHS is working to develop a simplified waiver process for the requirement that programs meet the 80% attendance threshold in order to be paid for all eligible days for all children. More information on this process is forthcoming. Early education programs funded through ISBE are advised that their funding will not be affected by program closure in response to the public health emergency.

**Q. Parent co-pays for CCAP are a large part of my budget. Will families still need to pay co-pays, or will they be waived?**

IDHS is working on a process to reduce family co-payments to \$1 for the months of April and May. This co-payment reduction is being implemented to support both families and providers.

**Q: I serve mostly private-pay families. What financial assistance is available to providers and their staff to manage through this emergency?**

Guidance is forthcoming regarding disaster assistance loans from the Small Business Administration and other federal resources available to providers and employees, including emergency Family and Medical Leave, Emergency Sick Leave, and Unemployment Insurance.

**Q: Do I have to provide a refund to parents if I close my child care program?**

Consult the agreement or contract you have with parents. The state does not regulate this area.

**Q. My child care center is closing, but I want to make sure children still receive their meals. What can I do?**

If your program closes, we strongly encourage you to develop a plan for ensuring that children in your program that receive free and reduced price meals through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) continue to receive meals. You may wish to reach out to your local school district to explore partnering with them or contact the ISBE Nutrition Department at [CNP@isbe.net](mailto:CNP@isbe.net) to determine how to provide additional meals in your community.

**Q. My license is expiring in the near future. Will I be penalized if DCFS is not able to renew my license while I am closed?**

DCFS is developing guidance which will be available in the coming days.

**Q. My CPR and First Aid certification is about to expire. Can I get an extension on completing this training?**

DCFS is developing guidance which will be available in the coming days.