

READY LOUISIANA

INVEST IN EARLY EDUCATION

Updated as of June 15, 2020: Ready Louisiana Talking Points

A note on how to use the talking points: *The talking points are merely suggestions, not mandates. The Ready LA Coalition leadership team is providing them as a tool to guide conversations. Please feel free to personalize as appropriate. The only point we want all Coalition members to remain consistent on is our ask:*

Ready Louisiana Coalition's Updated Legislative Ask for Early Care and Education during COVID-19: Invest \$25.1 million to maintain access to the Child Care Assistance Program for 4,000 children of essential workers.

During the pandemic, the Louisiana Department of Education expanded access to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for the children of essential workers.

- This choice ensured that the children of paramedics, certified nurse assistants, grocery store clerks, and more had a safe place to go while their parents kept us safe, healthy, and fed.
- However, the expansion was done with a specific fund within the CARES Act money.
- Normally, CCAP has funding to serve about 16,000 children. Because the Department was able to utilize federal funds, CCAP is now serving over 20,000 children.
- However, these dollars from the CARES Act will run out in approximately six months and once they are gone, nearly 4,000 children will lose access to care.
- If there is another COVID-19 spike this winter, there will be no way to expand CCAP again.
- If policymakers do not find \$25.1 million for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), 4,000 children will lose access to quality care by the end of the year.

How do we find the \$25.1 million? Policymakers can utilize money from the CARES Act stimulus, TANF dollar reallocations, and the Governor Emergency Education Relief fund to maintain access to the Child Care Assistance Program for 4,000 Louisiana children of working families.

- CARES Act dollars can be used for direct COVID-19 response measures. Caring for the children of essential workers should be considered a COVID-19 response.
- There is approximately \$5 million in TANF that can be reallocated to the Department of Education.
- The Governor Emergency Education Relief fund allows governors to use funds to help education in their states as they see fit, and early care and education is an acceptable use of those funds.

Early care and education is an essential element of child development, as well a necessity to keep our economy strong. We cannot afford to have 4,000 children of essential workers lose their access to quality care.

Working families have an extremely difficult time accessing affordable, quality care for their children, which hurts their ability to participate fully in the economy and provide for their families.

- Child care costs almost as much as public college tuition in Louisiana, and is the biggest budget expense for most families with young children.
- Research shows that children suffer developmentally during economic downturns.
 - Science indicates that children will experience delays in development when their families experience increased stress and have limited resources due to an economic downturn like the one we are facing from the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - According to recent testimony given by our new Superintendent, Dr. Cade Brumley, between 50 and 90% of Louisiana kindergarteners arrive at school not ready to learn—which hurts them and taxes our already-burdened school system as teachers try to remediate those deficits.