
March 20, 2020

Guidance for Child Care Centers, Child Care Homes, and Early Education Programs

In response to the unprecedented public health emergency that Illinois is facing as a result of the spread of COVID-19, Governor Pritzker has mandated the following closures for child care centers, child care homes, and early education programs across the state:

- Effective March 21, 2020 *all* child care centers licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), as well as legally license-exempt centers outside of schools.
- Effective March 21, 2020 *all* child care homes licensed by DCFS.
- Early education programs in public and private schools are required to remain closed while the K-12 schools are closed. This mandate covers any early childhood program for children ages birth through five located in public schools or in private schools.

The State is mindful that 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 Homes

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.

Emergency Child Care Centers

Effective March 21, 2020 child care centers that wish to serve as emergency child care sites for the children of critical emergency workers may apply for an Emergency Child Care License. *These emergency child care sites 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.

The 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>

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>

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>

All completed applications can be submitted to DCFS at Emergency.Daycare@illinois.gov.

Programs serving primarily low-income families will be able to apply for a grant to support continued operations and will be able to use their existing federal and state early childhood or child care funding to support operations. Emergency Child Care Programs operating in a center may serve 10 or fewer children in one room and may not move children between rooms. The list of critical emergency workers eligible to access child care through an Emergency Child Care Program is available on the State of Illinois Coronavirus Response website (coronavirus.illinois.gov).

All existing or new centers wishing to serve as an Emergency Child Care Program are required to submit an Emergency Child Care License application to DCFS to operate. Upon submission of the application, previously licensed programs will be able to operate immediately under a five-day grace period. If a site has not previously served as a licensed or license-exempt child care center, or if a site is currently serving as a licensed or license-exempt child care center and has *not* received a visit from DCFS in the past 12 months, DCFS will make a site visit to the program within 48 hours of application submission. Grants for Emergency Child Care Programs will be monitored closely and frequently reassessed to ensure a balance between supply and demand for care.

If you are not sure whether you are prepared to begin the process of opening an Emergency Child Care Program, 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.

Closed Programs Will Continue to Receive Public Funding During Closure

Early education programs funded through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) are advised that their funding will not be affected by program closure in response to the public health emergency, and ISBE will provide flexibility to grantees. The Office of Head Start has issued guidance that Head Start and Early Head Start programs will not be penalized for closure during the COVID-19 State Emergency. The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services will not reduce funding due to closures or low attendance during this period. The Illinois Department of Human Services is developing a simplified waiver process for the 80% attendance requirement in the Child Care Assistance Program for being paid for all eligible days for all enrolled children. Guidance on this process will be provided in the coming days. For programs funded by any or all of these funding streams, programs are expected to continue to pay all staff per their regular work schedule during any closures due to the public health emergency.

Where to Go for More Information

For information on disaster assistance loans from the Small Business Administration and other resources available to providers and employees, including emergency Family and Medical Leave, Emergency Sick Leave, and Unemployment Insurance, please visit the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development website (<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Pages/COVID-19.aspx>) or the Governor's COVID-19 Response website (coronavirus.illinois.gov). For all other questions, please email gov.oecd@illinois.gov.

We are committed to supporting our early childhood education and care providers through this health emergency and appreciate all that you are doing to support children, families, and your communities.

Grace Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services

Marc Smith, Acting Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Carmen Ayala, State Superintendent, Illinois State Board of Education

Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Acting Executive Director, Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development