

ODJFS Webinar: Emergency Child Care Measures - 03/18/2020

ODJFS Implements Emergency Child Care Measures during COVID-19 Pandemic

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Director Kim Hall announced emergency action today to provide child care to families where parents work in the health, safety, and essential service fields during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The agency will issue temporary pandemic child care licenses to ensure communities have access to child care.

“It is important that professionals who are essential to protecting the public are able to ensure their families have safe places to go while they are at work,” said Ohio Governor Mike DeWine. “Helping to address this need allows our health and safety providers to focus on protecting and caring for all Ohioans.”

New temporary pandemic child care centers will operate under reduced regulations focused solely on the health and safety of children. Pandemic child care center licenses can be granted to already existing child care centers or new child care centers that may be created in response to community needs.

Parents who are able should identify a safe and healthy alternative child care option during the pandemic that will keep their child(ren) out of a group setting and not with an elderly provider. However, we recognize that this is not an option for all families and want to ensure all children have a safe option while parents provide health, safety, and other essential services.

“Health care workers, first responders, and those working so hard to provide Ohioans with essential services are needed now more than ever. These measures will ensure that these families can maintain their work schedules, while resting assured that their children are safe,” said Director Hall. “These measures will be in force for the duration of the pandemic.”

Karen Lampe (*Advocacy Chair, Ohio Association of Child Care Providers/President, CWCC, Inc.*)

Leeanne Cornyn (*Director of Children’s Initiatives, Office of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine*)

- Yesterday ODJFS rolled out a temporary Pandemic Child Care Program SHOULD the governor close child care
- Working with experts from the field as next steps evolve
- This is a fluid process, constantly evaluating what occurs as things are rolled out.

Kara Bertke-Wente (*Asst Director for Health and Human Services, ODJFS*)

- Executive order signed last night for temporary Pandemic Child Care Program relevant to child care centers. Another signed this morning to be shared today. Executive order only applies to center-based programs – not family child care programs.
- At closure, programs can go directly into temporary licensure
- If we have to close, State is committed to continue to pay programs for publically funded children. PFCC payment will continue weekly even when programs are closed.
- Programs can apply to be a temporary Pandemic Center. ODJFS started to call programs yesterday to determine who might be interested in fulfilling this role given the unknowns of when programs will be required to close
- Draft rules include the following:
 - Application form – First step is for a program to complete the one-page form.
 - Reviewed by ODJFS
 - Once approved, programs will begin to enroll essential staff.
 - The only children that can be served are children whose parents are on the list of “essential” staff (health, safety, other essential services). State will attempt to cover cost of essential staff children - this is meant to alleviate the burden of cost to families in need of care.
 - Programs will run under reduced regulations
 - Still need to have appropriate sq ft and building safety standards met

- Employees with background checks (including staff volunteers) – requested within 7 days of hire (can be onsite and with children, just not left alone)
 - At least one staff with CPR training
 - Increased ratios will remain in effect
 - Approved discipline approaches, must report suspected abuse/neglect
 - Enrollment form in files
 - Attendance tracking
 - Areas suitable to DAP
 - Protect from conditions that threaten safety, health and wellbeing
 - Rest, nap, sleep accommodations that match standards
 - No transportation or swimming unless given prior approval
 - Questions regarding increasing insurance coverage should be directed to insurance agent
- Short term license to allow centers to provide “essential” services
 - Effective beginning 03/17/2020 during time defined by Governor until he removes the rule
 - No one is required to become a Pandemic Center
 - Will continue to pay for PFCC if decision is made to close child care programs statewide
 - The letter will cover the temporary license and the State’s committed support of programs should the State close all child care. Pandemic days are only applicable for open programs.

Kim Hall (*Director of ODJFS*)

- Thank you for your patience and commitment to continuing to support workforce development and support when it comes to providing childcare for those that are essential.