COVID – 19 Crisis
Emergency Funding Assistance for Early Learning/Child Care Providers

OF INTEREST TO
The Office of Early Learning (OEL, the Office), Early Learning Coalitions and other subrecipients of OEL implementing federal and state early learning programs (ELCs, coalitions), such as the School Readiness Program (SR) and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) and private early learning/child care providers not contracted with a coalition (Providers).

SUMMARY
This program guidance addresses the methods for tracking costs associated with the COVID-19 crisis. It also provides coalitions and providers guidance about emergency funding assistance for early learning providers and their staff affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic.

AUTHORITY

Related Federal Regulations/Authority
Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act
CCDF_ACF_Info_Memo_2017-02, CCDF Spending Flexibility during Federal or State Declared Emergency
Child Care and Development Block Grant Act
– Section 658E(c)(2)(I) Establishment of Health and Safety Requirements
– Section 658E(c)(2)(U) Disaster Preparedness

45 CFR 98.56 Restriction on the Use of Funds
– 45 CFR Part 98, Subpart E, § 98.41, Health and Safety Requirements

CCDF-ACF-IM-2020-01, CCDF Discretionary Funds Appropriated in the CARES Act (Public Law 116-136)
Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance for State Territorial Local and Tribal Governments

Related Florida Statutes/Authority/Guidance
DEM Order NO. 20-004, COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
Florida Department of Education Press Release March 17, 2020
Section 252.34, Florida Statutes
Child Care and Development Fund State Plan for FY 19/21 (effective 10/1/2018), Section 1.8 – Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan
Office of Early Learning Program Guidance 240.20, Tracking Costs for Disasters
Definitions
Please refer to PG 240.20, Tracking Costs for Disasters.

BACKGROUND

During normal times, early learning child care providers operate on extremely small margins. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused catastrophic drops in enrollment, as well as unexpected closures, which could put many providers out of business forever. In addition, those providers that remain open are operating with a fraction of their income in order to provide care during this time of uncertainty.

Recognizing the impact of this crisis, state and federal stimulus efforts have been enacted to provide relief to American families, small businesses and major industries as they struggle with the effects of this crisis. On the state level, the Division of Emergency Management issued Emergency Order No. 20-004 directing the Department of Education (FDOE) to “take all appropriate actions … to promote the health, safety, welfare and education of Florida students,” thereby allowing the DOE to waive the statutory rules for temporary closures, payment of absences and collection of parent copays.

Federal relief legislation has been passed in three phases. Phase I, the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, provides additional Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans and other immediate funding. Phase II, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, requires certain employers to provide paid sick and family leave. Phase III, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES), “provides fast and direct economic assistance for American workers, families, and small businesses, and preserve jobs for our American industries.” Part of this relief act is an infusion of $3.5 billion into the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to support existing federal programs providing the care and education of young children, as well as their families. Florida’s allocation of this additional funding will be administered by OEL, in cooperation with FDOE, coalitions and early learning providers, as well as many other resources and agencies.

FISCAL ISSUES
The issuance of supplemental federal funding requires alternative tracking of costs for clients served as a result of a declared state of emergency. This includes clients currently eligible as well as potential clients made eligible due to the resulting disaster.

PROGRAM GUIDANCE

The following guidelines should be used by coalitions, providers and families in Florida during the COVID-19 state of emergency as declared by the President of the United States and the Governor of Florida.

CCDF/School Readiness Funded Initiatives

Temporary Closures

School Readiness Program

Rule 6M-4.501, F.A.C., addresses the reimbursement of providers during temporary closures in accordance with the coalition’s Continuance of Operations Plan (C.O.O.P.). During periods of temporary closure, the provider certifies its enrollment/attendance rosters to reflect the dates of closure. Current clients usually maintain their established billing group; however, those meeting eligibility requirements for Essential Employees (see below) may choose to transfer billing groups.
When the child remains at home and does not attend another School Readiness provider, the payment for the child is included in the reimbursement for the temporarily closed program. OEL has determined that all days for children enrolled during the months of March through July 2020 will be paid, regardless of attendance.

When the child is temporarily enrolled with another School Readiness provider due to disaster related conditions at the original provider’s facility, the child record must be updated using the original eligibility codes to show enrollment with the temporary provider for the period the child is in attendance. Only the temporary provider will receive the payment for the child during this period.

Payments for the transferred child must not be included in the reimbursement during the period of temporary closure and while the child is enrolled and attending another School Readiness provider.

**Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK)**

Rule 6M-8.204, F.A.C., addresses the conditions for reimbursement of providers during temporary closures. Due to the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis, OEL has determined all days will be paid for the months of March through July 2020 regardless of absences. No adjustments for the “80/20” rule will occur.

Coalitions should instruct VPK providers to **not** update their calendars within the Provider Portal (see [EFS Modernization Guidance for COVID-19](#)).

**Both School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten Programs**

Beginning in May 2020, in order to be paid based on enrollment, OEL requires the following:

- Providers that are closed **will be required to complete a monthly online questionnaire** that will ask for information related to their closure. Exceptions may be requested by coalitions and authorized by OEL on a case-by-case basis.
- Providers that remain open require no additional action.

In addition, the coalition or contractor must utilize the Temporary Closure screen to flag records in the single statewide information system (SSIS) that could be used to claim reimbursement of potential disaster related funds during the crisis period.

For all periods and programs, early learning providers in both SR and VPK programs must continue to submit monthly attendance via the Provider Portal. For updated instructions on entering and processing attendance during the period of waived absences, please reference [EFS Modernization Guidance for COVID-19](#).

**Fee Waivers – School Readiness**

In accordance with DEM Order No. 20-004, all parent copays were waived, regardless of income, starting April 1, 2020. The Office reviews this fee waiver every 14 days and communicates any updates to coalitions on a timely basis. Changes were implemented by OEL’s EFS Mod team into the SSIS and no further action is needed by coalitions. Expenditures must be reported on the COVID-19 Expenditure Reporting Form and submitted with the coalition’s monthly invoice.

**Provider Mini-Grants for Professional Development, Infrastructure and Health and Safety Cleaning Supplies**

Funds set-aside for quality-related activities may be used to provide one-time grants to support/enhance early learning child care services before, during and after disasters and declared states of emergency. OEL’s management team evaluated the COVID-19 state of emergency and activated the emergency
purchasing processes available to coalitions as described in the appendices for Program Guidance 240.20, Tracking Costs for Disasters. Please refer to the individual appendix for specific information related to the following types of mini-grants and related costs for early learning providers:

- Appendix A: Professional Development
- Appendix B: Infrastructure
- Appendix C: Health and Safety Cleaning Supplies

**Invoicing/OCA Coding Instructions, CCDF/School Readiness Funded**

Costs resulting from the temporary closures and fee waiver initiatives are considered direct services. These costs should be charged to the appropriate OCA code as generated by the SSIS and reported on the 5045. Costs for mini-grant initiatives should be coded and tracked as indicated in the appropriate appendix referenced above. Coalitions should submit reimbursement requests (invoices) per instructions in OEL’s [Program Guidance 240.06 – Reimbursement Requests](#).

Although these costs are reimbursable under existing SR OCAs, ELCs/RCMA and OEL will need to track expenditures and planned purchases related to each emergency/disaster event. The COVID-19 Expenditure Reporting Form has been placed in each ELC’s Invoice folder on SharePoint for the specified year. For example, for FY2019-20 the file would be located at ELC Coalitions Zone > Coalition Invoices - Restricted > FY 19-20. This spreadsheet must be submitted with a coalition/RCMA’s monthly invoice.

**CCDF - CARES Act Funded Initiatives**

**Immediate: First Responders/Health Care Workers Direct Services**

The CARES Act prioritizes short-term funding to provide services for first responders and health care workers that must work outside the home and would not otherwise have child care. OEL has developed a referral program for those meeting the eligibility requirements in accordance with 6M-4.208 for at-risk families. Requirements include –

- The child is a US citizen;
- The family resides in Florida;
- One or both parents are employed as an essential employee as defined by the Governor’s Executive Order 20-91 and determined by the Office of Early Learning. Currently, only those in the Healthcare/Public Health and Law Enforcement, Public Safety, and other First Responders categories qualify for services. Updates to those qualifying for essential employee child care service benefits will be posted on OEL’s [website](#).

Families meeting the requirements for essential employees must be transferred into the billing/eligibility group BG1 – ESS within the SSIS to ensure proper tracking of costs that could be used to claim reimbursement of potential disaster related funds during the crisis period.

**First Responders/Health Care Workers Bonus Grant for Providers**

Early Learning/child care providers and family child care homes serving essential workers (as determined by OEL) will receive a monthly bonus/incentive of $500 per child, up to $4,000 per month, for a maximum of $12,000 per provider location. This incentive is in addition to the School Readiness reimbursement rate the contracted provider receives.
Provider Eligibility

Early Learning/child care providers that currently have a School Readiness contract with a coalition or RCMA, including licensed family child care homes, and are serving eligible first responder and healthcare worker families.

Please refer to Attachment 1 – Child Care Services for First Responders and Health Care Workers Q&A Guidance and Attachment 2 – Bonuses for Child Care Providers – First Responder Guidance for answers to commonly asked questions regarding these enrollments and bonuses.

Phase I and Phase II: Supports to Contracted and Non-Contracted Child Care Centers

Coalitions will receive additional funding to support both contracted and non-contracted child care providers. These funds are intended to support providers that were open as of April 30, 2020 and to reopen providers that were closed on this date. Both Phase I (Open Providers) and Phase 2 (Closed Providers) have a specific allocation for Contracted Providers (Priorities 1 and 3) and Non-Contracted Providers (Priorities 2 and 4). These allocations are included in Attachment 5.

The allocation for these funds to each coalition is based on a match of the provider data from the Enhanced Field System Modernization (EFSM) file and the Department of Children and Families data which resulted in the identification of approximately 12,000 child care providers. Coalitions were provided these data for their review and verification.

To ensure that all eligible child care providers receive appropriate support, each coalitions’ allocation will be sufficient to fund any omitted eligible child care programs. These funds should be paid to providers as soon as practicable (i.e., within 15 business days). Early learning/child care providers that contract with multiple coalitions will be paid by the coalition where the provider is physically located (“home” coalition). Non-contracted providers will be paid by the coalition that serves the physical location of the provider. Duplicate grants will not be offered. Grant funding levels for providers meeting the eligibility criteria are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Range</th>
<th>Base Grant Funding</th>
<th>Bonus for Serving Infant/Toddler and/or Special Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 12</td>
<td>$ 2,250</td>
<td>$ 2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 - 20</td>
<td>$ 3,750</td>
<td>$ 2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 - 74</td>
<td>$ 6,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>75 - 149</td>
<td>$ 12,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>150+</td>
<td>$ 18,000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Range</th>
<th>Base Grant Funding</th>
<th>Bonus for Serving Infant/Toddler and/or Special Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 - 20</td>
<td>$ 2,875</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 74</td>
<td>$ 4,600</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 - 149</td>
<td>$ 9,200</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150+</td>
<td>$ 13,800</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
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Phase II: High-Quality Reopening Support Grants for Early Learning/Child Care Providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Range</th>
<th>Base Grant Funding</th>
<th>Bonus for Serving Infant/Toddler and/or Special Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>$ 1,575</td>
<td>$ 2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 - 20</td>
<td>$ 2,625</td>
<td>$ 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 74</td>
<td>$ 4,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>75 -149</td>
<td>$ 8,400</td>
<td>$ 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150+</td>
<td>$ 12,600</td>
<td>$ 2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-Contracted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Range</th>
<th>Base Grant Funding</th>
<th>Bonus for Serving Infant/Toddler and/or Special Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>$ 1,208</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 - 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 - 74</td>
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<td>75 -149</td>
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<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150+</td>
<td>$ 9,660</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase I: Emergency Child Care Relief Grants for Early Learning/Child Care Providers

These additional funding allocations are intended to support SR and VPK providers and non-contracted providers that were open for business as of April 30, 2020, to assist them in staying open during the COVID-19 crisis. These providers may have had intermittent closures. (Providers that have closed permanently after April 30, 2020 are not eligible for these funds.)

**Contracted (SR/VPK)**

Early learning/child care providers will receive additional funding based on their DCF capacity, when available, or EFSM capacity. Providers must meet each of the following eligibility criteria for payment:

- Early learning/child care provider was open for business providing early learning services as of April 30, 2020 (and may have had intermittent closures); and
- Early learning/child care provider has a current/active SR or VPK contract on April 30, 2020 with at least one early learning coalition or Redlands Christian Migrant Association, Inc. (RCMA); and
- Early learning/child care provider completes the grant application (Attachment 3).

**Non-Contracted**

Early learning/child care providers will receive additional funding based on their DCF capacity, when available. Providers must meet each of the following eligibility criteria for payment:

- Early learning/child care provider was open for business providing early learning services as of April 30, 2020 (and may have had intermittent closures); and
- Early learning/child care provider agrees to complete a Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) profile in the Florida Early Learning Provider Services Portal; and
- Early learning/child care provider has not received any Class I DCF violations within the past 12 months; and
- Early learning/child care provider did not have a contract with the early learning coalition that was terminated for cause within the past five years; and
- Early learning/child care provider is not included on the Florida Child Care Food Program (CCFP) USDA Disqualified List; and
- Early learning/child care provider completes the grant application (Attachment 4), which includes submitting an IRS Form W-9 for payment.

**Phase II: High-Quality Reopening Support Grants for Early Learning/Child Care Providers**

Coalitions will receive additional funding to support closed SR and VPK providers and non-contracted providers that were **closed** for business as of **April 30, 2020** and **have either reopened or are planning to reopen** to assist them in reopening during the COVID-19 crisis. If providers have not reopened by the projected date in their application, the coalition may take the necessary actions to recoup these funds.

**Contracted (SR/VPK)**

Early learning/child care providers will receive additional funding based on their DCF capacity, when available, or EFS Mod Provider Profile capacity data if DCF capacity is not available, with a minimum amount based upon capacity. Providers must meet each of the following eligibility criteria for payment:

- Early learning/child care provider was closed for business as of April 30, 2020 and have reopened providing early learning services or plan to reopen by August 1, 2020 (consistent with local ordinances or restrictions); and
- Early learning/child care provider has a current/active SR or VPK contract on April 30, 2020 with at least one early learning coalition or Redlands Christian Migrant Association, Inc. (RCMA); and
- Early learning/child care provider has either Gold Seal status or CLASS composite score of 3.5 or higher; and
- Early learning/child care provider completes the grant application (Attachment 3), which includes plans for expenditure of funds and reopened date or tentative date for reopening.

**Non-Contracted**

Early learning/child care providers will receive additional funding based on their DCF capacity. Providers must meet each of the following eligibility criteria for payment:

- Early learning/child care provider was closed for business as of April 30, 2020 and have reopened providing early learning services or plan to reopen by August 1, 2020 (consistent with local ordinances or restrictions); and
- Early learning/child care provider agrees to complete a Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) profile in the Florida Early Learning Provider Services Portal; and
- Early learning/child care provider has not received any Class I DCF violations within the past 12 months; and
- Early learning/child care provider did not have a contract with the early learning coalition that was terminated for cause within the past five years; and
- Early learning/child care provider has either Gold Seal status or CLASS composite score of 3.5 or higher; and
– Early learning/child care provider is not included on the Florida Child Care Food Program (CCFP) USDA Disqualified List; and
– Early learning/child care provider completes the grant application (Attachment 4), which includes plans for expenditure of funds, entering a reopened date or tentative date for reopening, and submitting an IRS Form W-9 for payment.

**Invoicing/OCA coding instructions, CARES Act funded**

Costs resulting from the First Responder/Health Care Worker Direct Services initiative are considered direct services. These costs should be charged to the appropriate Other Cost Accumulators (OCA) code as generated by the SSIS and reported on the 5045. Costs for First Responders/Health Care Workers Bonus should be coded to the OCAs as follows and all costs should be included in the coalition/RCMA’s monthly CARES invoice. Please contact your grant manager with questions or requests for assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAADV</td>
<td>CARES Advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CADMN</td>
<td>CARES Administrative Costs (limited to 5% of total CARES expenditures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESSB</td>
<td>CARES Essential Employee Bonuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESSD</td>
<td>CARES Essential Employee Direct Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERGC</td>
<td>CARES Emergency Relief Act – Contracted (SR/VPK) Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERGN</td>
<td>CARES Emergency Relief Act – Non-contracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHQGC</td>
<td>CARES High Quality Reopening Support Grants Contracted (SR/VPK) Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHQGN</td>
<td>CARES High Quality Reopening Support Grants Non-Contracted Providers</td>
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**EFFECTIVE DATE**

Issuance of this guidance represents approval by OEL management of the indicated procedures and related administrative forms. These procedures will be effective as of the date of this guidance listed below.

**HISTORY**


**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Child Care Services for First Responders and Health Care Workers Q&A Guidance
Attachment 2 – Bonuses for Child Care Providers – First Responder Guidance
Attachment 3 – COVID-19 Grant Application: SR/VPK Provider
Attachment 4 – COVID-19 Grant Application: Non-Contracted Provider
Attachment 5 – CARES Phase 1 and II Allocations by Provider (Phase and Priority)

Please direct questions and comments to the Office of Early Learning at oel.questions@oel.myflorida.com