



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

OF INTEREST TO

The Division of Early Learning (DEL, the Division), Early Learning Coalitions and other subrecipients of DEL implementing federal and state early learning programs (ELCs, coalitions), such as the School Readiness (SR) Program and the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program 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, their staff and families affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic.

AUTHORITY

Related Federal Regulations/Authority

[Public Health Emergency Nationwide - COVID-19 and subsequent renewals](#)

[Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#)

[Consolidated Appropriations Act, Division M - Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations \(CRRSA\) Act, 2021](#)

[American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act of 2021](#)

[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
- 45 CFR Part 98, Subpart B, § 98.16, Plan Provisions

[CCDF-ACF-IM-2020-01](#), CCDF Discretionary Funds Appropriated in the CARES Act (Public Law 116-136)

[CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-01](#), CCDF Discretionary Funds Appropriated in the CRRSA Act (Public Law 116-260)

[CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-02](#), Child Care Stabilization Grants Appropriated in the ARP Act (Public Law 117-2)

[Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance for States, Tribal Governments, and Certain Eligible Local Governments](#)

Related Florida Statutes/Authority/Guidance

[DEM Order NO. 20-004, COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)

[Department of Education Emergency Order #2020-EO-01](#)

[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

[Division of Early Learning Program Guidance 240.20, Tracking Costs for Disasters](#)

Reference to any laws, rules and regulations in this guidance document includes revisions to those laws and regulations made after the effective date of this guidance document.

Definitions

Please refer to PG 240.20, *Tracking Costs for Disasters*.

BACKGROUND

During regular operations, 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 permanently. In addition, those providers that remain open are operating with a fraction of their income in order to provide care during this unprecedented public health care pandemic crisis.

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.

Initial Federal relief legislation was 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 DEL, in cooperation with FDOE, coalitions and early learning providers, as well as many other agencies and other community partners.

On December 27, 2020, an additional Federal COVID stimulus package, known as the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act, 2021, totaling \$900 billion was signed into law. The package extended many relief programs from the CARES Act and allocates almost \$10 billion in additional funds for the CCDBG programs.

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act (Public Law 117-2) was signed into law and appropriated an additional \$42,515,000,000 in funding for Child Care Stabilization Grants.

FISCAL ISSUES

The issuance of supplemental federal funding requires alternative tracking of costs for coalitions, providers and families served as a result of a declared state of emergency. This includes currently eligible families as well as potentially eligible families due to the resulting disaster.

PROGRAM GUIDANCE

The following guidelines are to 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. Included in this program guidance are CCDF/School Readiness funded Initiatives. Please refer to the following appendices for more information regarding the funding provided by each of the Federal stimulus acts –

- Appendix A – CARES Act Initiatives
 - Voluntary PreKindergarten – Additional Closure Days (Oct 2020 – June 2021)
 - Fee (Copay) Waivers (May – June 2021)
 - First Responders/Health Care Workers Direct Services (April 2020 – March 2021)
 - First Responders/Health Care Workers Bonus Grant (April 2020 – March 2021)
 - Phase I – Emergency Child Care Relief Grants
 - Phase II – High-Quality Reopening Support Grants
 - Phase III - Reopening Support Grants
 - Phase IV – Additional Support Grants (Providers open 10/15/2020)
- Appendix B – CRRSA Act Initiatives
 - Phase V Grants – Support Grants (Providers open 4/1/2021)
 - Phase VI Grants – Additional Support Grants (Providers open 9/1/2021)
 - Voluntary PreKindergarten – Additional Closure Days due to COVID-19 (July 2021 – June 2022)
 - Coalition Workforce Initiatives for Early Educators
 - Coalition Program Outreach, Awareness, and Family Supports
 - ESSER II VPK Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring
- Appendix C – ARP Act Initiatives
 - ARPA Provider Stabilization Subgrants – Round 1

Temporary Closures

School Readiness Program

Refer to DEL Program Guidance 240.22, Reimbursement for Closed Private Early Learning Child Care Providers for information regarding temporary closures for School Readiness private providers.

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, DEL has determined all days will be paid for the months of March through September 2020 regardless of absences and closures. No monthly adjustments for the “80/20” rule will occur for these months and the final fiscal year “80/20” adjustment will exclude these months in its calculation.

Coalitions should instruct VPK providers to **not** update their calendars within the Provider Portal for closures that occur during the months of March through September 2020 to restore missed VPK class

hours (see [EFS Modernization Guidance for COVID-19](#)).

Beginning in October 2020, reimbursement for VPK absences and temporary closures revert to “normal” processing rules. Therefore, absences are subject to the “80/20” rule and reimbursable temporary closures for VPK classes are limited to 5 days for the remainder of the program year. Temporary closures beyond 5 days must be made up and VPK providers must update their calendars within the Provider Portal accordingly.

Please refer to Appendix A – CARES Act Initiatives and Appendix B – CRRSA Act Initiatives for more information regarding additional closures beyond those authorized in Rule 6M-8.204, F.A.C.

Both School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten Programs

From May – June 2020, in order to be paid based on enrollment, DEL requires the following:

- Providers that are closed **were 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 DEL on a case-by-case basis.
- Providers that remained 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. Please refer to [EFS Mod Process for Emergency Closures Modified for COVID 19 Memo](#) for further instructions on how to complete this process.

For all periods and programs, early learning providers in both SR and VPK programs must continue to submit monthly attendance via the [Florida Early Learning Provider Services 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, for the period from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. The Office reviewed this fee waiver every 14 days and communicated any updates to coalitions on a timely basis.

Changes were implemented by DEL’s EFS Mod team into the SSIS and no further action is needed by coalitions. Please refer to Appendix A – CARES Act Initiatives for additional periods of approved fee waivers, as parent copayments were again waived, regardless of income, for May and June 2021.

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. DEL’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 DEL's [Program Guidance 240.06 – Reimbursement Requests](#).

Although these costs are reimbursable under existing SR OCAs, ELCs/RCMA and DEL 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.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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

HISTORY

Original guidance issued May 28, 2020, revised June 28, 2020, revised September 2, 2020, revised November 10, 2020, revised December 2, 2020, revised May 4, 2021, revised June 28, 2021, revised November 8, 2021, revised February 23, 2022.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – CARES Act Initiatives

Appendix B – CRRSA Act Initiatives

Appendix C – ARP Act Initiatives

If you have questions, contact OEL.Questions@oel.myflorida.com.