Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Supporting Subsidized Child Care Provider Attendance and Payment
Guidance Related to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Background
As part of the District of Columbia Government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) released guidance on Sept. 21, 2020, regarding the attendance policy and payment processes for subsidized child care providers, available here. OSSE also returned to processing monthly child care subsidy payments based on the child's attendance at the child care facility on Nov. 1, 2020.

Scope
This document is intended to address frequently asked questions related to child care providers' implementation of the *Guidance Related to COVID-19: Subsidized Child Care Provider Attendance and Payment Guidance*.

Date Issued
This updated guidance was issued on Feb. 19, 2021, and will remain in effect until further notice.

General
Child care providers must submit attendance for currently enrolled children in the OSSE Attendance Tracking System (OATS) by the fifth business day of each month. Providers must be open to receive payment, and children must attend in-person care to be considered present.

FAQs

1. **How should closed providers code monthly attendance?**
   - Programs that remain closed after Nov. 1, 2020 will not be reimbursed.
   - Providers who remain closed should code all children as an Unapproved Closure (UC).

2. **Should a program terminate from OATS children who are no longer attending?**
   - Child care providers may choose to terminate children who are no longer attending the facility from the child care provider's assignment roster, but are not required to do so at this time unless the family is seeking a placement change to a different child care provider.
   - Providers who remain closed should code all children as an Unapproved Closure (UC).

3. **How many excused and unexcused absences can a child have each month?**
   - The number of excused absences remains unchanged from the previous policy at **15 per month.**

- The number of unexcused absences has increased from five to **10 per month**. Monthly reimbursements will cease after the tenth unexcused absence for the enrolled child and resume the next month.
- Providers that remain closed for care should not report unexcused absences.

4. **Will COVID-19 related absences be considered excused? [UPDATED February 2021]**
   - Yes, COVID-19 related absences, including quarantining, can be considered excused absences if accompanied by appropriate documentation.
   - When requesting a closure for confirmed cases of COVID-19, an Unusual Incident Report (UIR), as well as documentation from DC Health outlining quarantine recommendations, should be submitted to the assigned Education Services Monitor (ESM), and to osse.childcarecomplaints@dc.gov. An ESM will make the decision for approval and payment for closures.
   - Children who are quarantining based on travel or potential exposure outside the care of the facility must provide documentation to support the absence. (Providers may claim unexcused absences when children or families are unable to provide such documentation and will be reimbursed up to the 10-day limit.) A UIR may be submitted as documentation for children who may be quarantining following exclusion or dismissal from care based on observed symptoms by the child care facility.
   - If the entire facility is temporarily closed following a confirmed COVID-19 case, the provider should use approved closure in OATS to receive payment during the closure.
   - If the facility temporarily closes selected classrooms due to COVID-19, then excused absence should be used in OATS for children enrolled in the closed classrooms.
   - In all instances, the facility should reach out to their assigned Education Services Monitor to communicate the facility's closure dates and ensure payment.

5. **What is acceptable documentation for COVID-19 related absences?**
   - A note from a doctor
   - Travel documents
   - Notification of exposure from DC Health
   - Detailed statement from the parent or guardian citing the details of potential exposure or travel
   - An Unusual Incident Report (UIR) submitted to and approved by OSSE

6. **What is acceptable documentation for an approved closure?**
   - An Unusual Incident Report (UIR) submitted to and approved by OSSE

7. **If a child is quarantined for 14 days, will OSSE pay for all 14 days?**
   - If a child is required to quarantine due to testing positive for COVID-19, or for any other COVID-19 related reason, including travel to any place other than Maryland, Virginia or a low-risk state or country (for an updated list of states exempt from these requirements see coronavirus.dc.gov/phase two) or documented close contact exposure, those absences are considered excused as long as there is acceptable documentation. Children can have up to 15 excused absences per month.

- If a family or provider is unable to provide documentation, providers may claim unexcused absences and will be reimbursed for 10 unexcused absences per month before monthly reimbursements cease.
- A 14-day quarantine is 14 calendar days, not 14 days of child care services. For children in traditional (five days per week) care, 10 days of unexcused absences should be sufficient to cover two weeks of care.

8. **Will school-age children receiving full-time care receive the full-time rate?**
   - School-age children receiving full-time care will receive the full-time "other day" rate.
   - School-age children do not need a new voucher to receive payment for these services.

9. **How should a program code days the site is closed for cleaning?**
   - Providers who are instructed to close their sites by OSSE or DC Health should code the closed days as **Approved Closure (AC)**, and submit the UIR as documentation.
   - Providers who **choose** to close for cleaning should code the closed days as Unapproved Closure (UC).

10. **Will a child care program receive subsidy reimbursement for virtual attendance?**
    - OSSE cannot reimburse child care programs for virtual attendance.
    - A child must be present at the child care provider site to be counted as attending.
    - Programs that are open should report absences for children who are not attending in person.

11. **Do the attendance polices apply to Out-of-School Time and School-Age programs?**
    - Yes, the policy and information described in this document apply to all subsidized child care programs.

Questions
If you have questions relating to this guidance, please contact Sara Mead, Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning, OSSE, at Sara.Mead@dc.gov.

For resources and information on the District of Columbia Government's COVID-19 response and recovery, please visit coronavirus.dc.gov.