



District of Columbia
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

CHILD CARE RECOVERY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance

August 2020

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The information contained in this document is aligned with guidance from the District of Columbia ReOpen DC Advisory Group, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), OSSE Division of Early Learning (DEL) and DC Health, and was created in collaboration with OSSE’s Child Care Recovery Working Group.

Executive Summary

Recognizing that positive early care and education is the foundation for child well-being and an important component of a successful economic recovery, the District of Columbia has worked to stabilize the child care sector as it provides high-quality programs and services that promote positive outcomes for early learners. As part of the District's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency, the [District-wide Child Care Disaster Response Plan](#) (CCDRP) was activated. The CCDRP provides OSSE with a decision-making structure and specific strategies to guide the response to an emergency or disaster. The District-wide CCDRP details the flow of communication from local response agencies and to child care providers, strategies for working with partner agencies to ensure child care providers meet federal and local requirements.

As part of the recovery period, OSSE is publishing *Child Care Recovery in the District of Columbia* (Recovery Plan). This document centralizes guidance, templates, and other tools to support childcare reopening efforts. It includes descriptions of and links to OSSE guidance and requirements related to COVID-19 and childcare; factors, documents, and questions for child care providers to consider when reopening; links to federal, state and local financial resources, as well as distance learning and other resources for providers; and sample templates for policies and procedures. These resources will help keep children, families and providers safe when they return to in-person learning environments.

Introduction

While COVID-19 presents unprecedented challenges for the child care sector, the District has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that child development facilities remain solvent through the pandemic, continue to serve families that need childcare the most, and reopen safely. As child care recovery progresses and more child care providers plan to reopen, OSSE is releasing this document to share current guidance, information, key considerations and resources that will help providers plan for and implement a recovery that is safe and sustainable.

The District's response to COVID-19 is an evolving effort, and all stakeholders must remain flexible to the demands that the pandemic is placing on all of us. OSSE reserves the right to amend or revoke any guidance or policy requirements and replace them with new guidance or requirements due to new and evolving information. The District continually monitors all emergency situations and will issue additional guidance as circumstances change.

Status of the Child Care Sector

In spring 2020, Mayor Bowser convened the ReOpen DC Advisory Group, made up of a steering committee and 11 industry- and population-oriented sector¹ committees, to provide recommendations for a safe and sustainable reopening in the District.

- [High-level recommendations of the education and child care committee](#)
- [Full recommendations of the education and child care committee](#)

¹ The ReOpen DC Advisory Group has representation from the following sectors: Education and Child Care; Equity, Disparity Reduction, Vulnerable Populations; Faith, Arts, Culture, Hotels, Sports, and Entertainment; Government Operations, Public Safety and Criminal Justice; Human Services, Social Services and Health; Open Spaces and Recreation; Public Health Innovation and Workforce; Real Estate and Construction; Restaurants and Food; Small Business and Retail; and Transportation and Infrastructure

Child Care Recovery Policies and Procedures

This section briefly describes and provides links to guidance and requirements to facilitate the District's child care recovery process. Please note, the guidance and requirements are subject to change as the District of Columbia advances through the reopening phases. Please visit [OSSE's website](#) to access the most recent COVID-19-related published guidance from OSSE.

NOTE: All provisions stated throughout **are required** except those provisions classified as “where feasible” or “developmentally appropriate.” Additionally, child care staff and families must adhere to the [Mayor's Order 2020-075 Phase Two of Washington, DC Reopening](#) to ensure the safe reopening of activities and business functions. Questions regarding information in this document can be sent to osse.delcommunications@dc.gov.

Child Care Health and Safety Guidance

On Aug. 21, 2020, OSSE released the revised Phase Two [Health and Safety Guidance for Child Care Providers](#). This guidance incorporates all health and safety requirements and recommendations for District child care providers that are operating during the public health emergency. This guidance was developed in coordination with DC Health and is informed by the latest health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The OSSE Health and Safety Guidance for Child Care Providers and supplemental documents incorporate all requirements child care providers must consider or adopt to protect the health and safety of children and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As circumstances change throughout the pandemic, OSSE will provide the latest health and safety guidance supplemental resources and optional checklists, [here](#).

Child Care Licensing and Compliance

On July 14, 2020, OSSE issued a new [policy on virtual inspections at licensed child development facilities](#) as an alternative to on-site inspections, to limit in-person interactions during the public health emergency and ongoing recovery period.

Subsidized Child Care

OSSE is continuing payments to child care providers who have signed a provider subsidy agreement given the extended COVID-19 public health emergency. Beginning May 1, 2020, a facility's monthly payments will equal the individual facility's average monthly payment for the current fiscal year from

Oct. 1, 2019, through Jan. 31, 2020. Subsidy payments will continue using this methodology for services provided through Sept. 30, 2020, whether a provider remains closed or chooses to open. View the updated [subsidized child care provider attendance and payment guidance](#), issued June 22, 2020, for additional information.

Strong Start/Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C

Effective beginning April 1, 2020, OSSE released guidance specifically relating to the provision of IDEA Part C services by early intervention services (EIS) providers under Part C of the federal IDEA. As of the effective date of this guidance, the offices of the state lead agency (OSSE) and the EIS provider (Strong Start, DC's Early Intervention Program (DC EIP)) are open and have resumed the delivery of Part C services, remotely. For additional questions, please view the supporting [IDEA, Part C Provision of Early Intervention Services](#) FAQ document.

- Current guidelines on what [Strong Start Early Intervention Program \(DC EIP\) virtual visits](#) will look like for families and caregivers.
- Current guidelines for [early interventionists conducting virtual early intervention visits](#) for the Strong Start DC EIP.
- Notification to families announcing that [DC IEP](#) services resumed.
- [Guidelines and requirements for vendor agencies](#) regarding virtual early intervention services.

Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP)

OSSE released [Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program \(PKEEP\) Guidance](#) regarding the operating status and child outcome assessment requirements for providers participating in PKEEP. This guidance was issued on May 12, 2020, and remained in effect through the end of the 2019-20 school year. Payment will continue to all facilities participating in PKEEP for costs incurred through Sept. 30, 2020. In August, OSSE issued additional [guidance for PKEEP programs for the 2020-21 school year](#), including a high-quality standards waiver process for a pre-K CBO's during this time.

For additional information on the PKEEP, please contact Christina Crayton, early childhood education policy officer, at Christina.Crayton@dc.gov.

Capital Quality

Due to the extension of the recommended closure period for child care providers, OSSE canceled the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observations for all child care providers for the 2019-20 program year.

View the [Capital Quality updates](#) for additional information.

Considerations for Child Care Recovery

As child care providers develop and implement reopening plans during the public health emergency and recovery period, there are a number of operational, planning and financing implications to consider. This section includes key guidance documents and questions to consider on reopening topics and decisions facing child care providers, including General Reopening Considerations, Capacity and New Enrollment, Determining Staffing Needs, and Financial Considerations.

General Reopening Considerations

General Reopening Considerations	
Review the Following Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Guidance for Child Care Providers (Updated Aug. 21, 2020)
Key Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you do a phased opening that begins with a few children re-enrolled and then gradually adds more children week to week? • Since COVID-19 may have resulted in families/children and staff being away from the program for a period of time, how can you ensure the transition goes smoothly? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What events (i.e., welcome-back activities) can facilitate this transition back? ○ How will the re-enrollment processes differ if you recover with fewer enrolled children than were enrolled pre-COVID-19? ○ What factors must be in place to increase enrollment levels? ○ Consider age groups, available teaching staff and which classrooms can be open safely while maintaining required physical distancing. ○ Consider the Mayor's Order to serve "Essential Workers." • How will you communicate with families about any new or updated information, such as changes in enrollment, health practices and closures? • What guidance has the facility adapted for families you may not be able to serve immediately? <p>Providers should contact their licensing specialist or the OSSE Early Childhood Education (ECE) Help Desk with questions on the guidance or the considerations.</p>

Considerations for Capacity and New Enrollment

OSSE’s updated [Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) includes provisions that will impact capacity and enrollment at child care facilities during Phase Two of the recovery period.

Considerations for Capacity and New Enrollment	
Review the Following Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Guidance for Child Care Providers (Updated Aug. 21, 2020) • Child Care Subsidy Guidance (Updated June 22, 2020)
Key Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What platforms are you using to share and communicate information about updated and/or temporary policies and procedures with families prior to re-enrollment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See Appendices for sample letters and policies for families. • What additional precautionary measures might you employ around the enrollment process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, online enrollment and bill pay. • If the facility is closed, how are you maintaining an updated “re-enrollment” list? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will families be able to change their enrollment information? (e.g., if a family chooses to move from full-time to part-time care)? ○ What, if any, guidance have you provided to families around the time to secure a child’s spot at the facility? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe the fee scale to secure a child’s spot at the center. • How are you accounting for changes in household income or other hardships? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you providing referrals and resources to families to connect them with support services, if needed? • Are facility policies and procedures for disenrollment different or the same compared to the period before COVID-19 (e.g., length of notice, how notice is given, refunds)?

Considerations for Determining Staffing Needs

An effective reopening plan should consist of a determination of staffing needs. Specifically, staff may need to be hired/rehired to ensure the facility can adhere to updated group size and physical distancing requirements.

Considerations for Determining Staffing Needs	
Review the Following Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Guidance for Child Care Providers
Key Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will I need to recruit new staff? • What training is needed to ensure staff are prepared to implement new COVID-19 policies and procedures? • What are the child care needs of current staff? Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are current teachers able to return to work at their normal capacity? ○ Do they have unmet child care needs? ○ Do they have any high-risk family members residing in their home? ○ Do they require a change in their normal work schedule? ○ Will/can you prioritize the children of child care facility staff so that staff can return to work? • How, if it at all, have benefits, paid time off or rate of pay changed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note: Discussions with board members or owners regarding benefits, paid time off, etc., should occur prior to staff returning to work. Facilities are also required to meet the DC minimum wage and living wage requirements as required by various government-funded programs. • What is the hiring process for temporary staff? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the process to phase out temporary staff? ○ Note: Please be sure to comply with current criminal background checks and minimum education requirements per 5-A DCMR. • Will changes in capacity, position, job description, title and classroom placement occur? • How is the well-being of staff being supported? Do you have resources or trainings for staff around reflection, mindfulness and self-care? • How will the classrooms begin to prepare for any potential new guidance or policies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can staff be given a day or dedicated timeframe without children present to prepare their classrooms and to learn and implement new or additional procedures? ○ How will the facility plan for mealtime upon reopening? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will families provide lunch and snacks? If so, how can you ensure families are following health and sanitation practices? • How will you communicate the following? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plans for reopening and policy changes to your licensing specialist

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Day-to-day operations and programming changes to staff and/or families
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Financial Considerations

When considering the recovery process, providers should re-examine their child care business plan to develop appropriate financial projections. A provider’s recovery plan should include additional financial considerations that are part of the broader implications of COVID-19. In some instances, providers may experience decreased enrollment as many families are experiencing economic hardships during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Providers should identify and leverage funding and grants made available to small businesses and think carefully about incurring new debt (through traditional or non-traditional loans).

Financial Considerations	
Review the Following Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recovery for Businesses on DC’s coronavirus website
Key Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the costs needed to procure the following? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cleaning the facility ○ Restocking food ○ Purchasing safety supplies and personal protective equipment ○ Purchasing cleaning supplies and paper products ● Will I need to recruit new staff? What are families’ intentions to return to child care? How will I contact families to assess their intentions to return? ● What marketing activities should I implement to attract families?

Federal, State and Local Financial Resources

OSSE is actively working to provide updates to child care providers on funding opportunities by regularly sharing out information about financial resources, including grants, loans and other funds. These include:

- [Economic Injury Disaster Loans \(EIDL\)](#)
This program provides working capital loans of up to \$2 million that can provide vital economic support to help qualified small businesses and private nonprofit organizations overcome the temporary loss of revenue as a result of the COVID-19 virus outbreak.
- [Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency Advance](#)
Loan advance of up to \$10,000 to provide economic relief to businesses that are currently experiencing a temporary loss of revenue. Small businesses, nonprofits, and independent contractors are all eligible to apply. Funds will be made available following a successful application. This loan advance will not have to be repaid.
- [Paycheck Protection Program \(PPP\)](#)
This program provides forgivable loans to small businesses and nonprofit organizations to pay their employees during the COVID-19 crisis. The Small Business Administration (SBA) will forgive loans if all employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities. The deadline to apply for the PPP was Aug. 8. Providers who received a PPP loan can [contact LIIF](#) for technical assistance.
- [Unemployment Compensation Process](#)
The DC Department of Employment Services (DOES) provides helpful resources that outline the process to file new or current unemployment claims. District residents may file for unemployment compensation at dcnetworks.org.
- [Financial Resources](#)
The Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) has created a list of emergency management resources for early childhood education providers.
- [Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#)
This act requires certain employers (more than 50 employees) to provide their employees with expanded family and medical leave through Dec. 31, 2020 for specified reasons related to COVID-19. Covered employers must provide all employees with:
 - Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of expanded family and medical leave at the employee's regular rate of pay
 - Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of expanded family and medical leave

For those employees that have been working for at least 30 days, the covered employer must provide them with up to an additional 10 weeks of expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay.

- [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#)

The District's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children up to age 5 buy the food they need for good health and receive nutrition and breastfeeding counseling.

Distance Learning Resources

OSSE recognizes the importance of providing early childhood educators with tools and strategies to serve children and families in a remote learning environment. The following resources introduce best practices for implementing remote/distance learning and platforms to facilitate these virtual experiences.

- OSSE's [Distance Learning for Early Childhood Education](#) guide helps early care and education providers engage with children and families in a virtual setting. It includes:
 - Information and resources on distance learning systems;
 - Tips for online success; and
 - Information on current distance learning opportunities available.
- [How to Use the Early Learning Standards and Distance Learning Guide to Support Children and Families](#)
This how-to guide will help you use the DC Early Learning Standards (DC ELS) and Distance Learning Guide to support children and families.
- **Google Hangouts training series**
This series has been developed to aid educators and directors in utilizing the free resource. It will take place at 1 p.m. each Monday and will provide an overview of Google Hangouts, assistance in navigating the system and share strategies for using it as a tool to support family engagement. You can register for the training [via this link](#).

Other Resources for Child Care Providers

- [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#)
The CACFP provides a monthly financial subsidy, training and technical assistance, nutrition education, and food safety information to child development centers, adult day care centers, sponsored day care homes, afterschool programs and emergency shelters serving nutritious meals and snacks to eligible infants, children, and adults. New waivers increase CACFP flexibility, allowing child care programs to receive reimbursements for meals that do not meet the meal pattern requirements and providers can continue receiving CACFP reimbursement for distributing meals to parents or guardians to take home to their children (regardless of whether provider is open or closed for the care of children).

- [DC Child Care Connections](#)
DC Child Care Connections is the District’s Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) system. CCR&R provides responsive services and evidence-based supports that promote high-quality early care and education in DC. CCR&R provides a wide variety of services to families and early care and education providers, including connecting families with early care and education opportunities; providing technical assistance, consultation and coaching for facilities; providing professional development opportunities for early childhood educators; and providing and maintaining literature, books, resources and curriculum for families and educators.
- [Child Care Recovery Best Practices Website](#)
Resources, templates and tips shared by child care providers in the District of Columbia.
- [Child Care Supply Needs](#)
Lists a few organizations/businesses with a host of resources, supplies and materials that may benefit the District's child care community. Additional resources will be available on the second tab as additional resources are added.
- [Vendors/Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
DC Child Care Connections has created [a live spreadsheet](#) with up-to-date cleaning supply and PPE vendor information.
- [COVID-19 Testing Sites](#)
Please click the above link to view the list of testing sites in the District.
- [Supplemental CDC Guidance for Child Care Programs](#)
This guidance does not supersede applicable federal state, and local laws and policies for child care programs.

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Letter Templates and Policies and Procedures

NOTE: These resources were developed by [Early Childhood Share DC](#)

Sample Letters to Keep Families Informed regarding COVID-19 (Hygiene and Child Care Closures)

- Memo to Families – Notice of Important Well-Being, Hygiene, and Cleaning Practices
- Sample Letter Notifying Families Regarding Health and Safety Policy Changes in a Child Care Program

- Sample Letter Notifying Families of Child Care Closures Due to COVID-19

Sample COVID-19 Policies and Procedures for Families and Staff

- Family Communication Policy
- Emergency Contact Information Form
- Family Handbooks
- Family Notification / Acknowledgement of Changes in Policies and Procedures
- Drop Off / Pick Up – Families May Enter Building
- Drop Off / Pick Up – Families May Not Enter Building
- Meal Preparation and Service Policy
- Staff Daily Health Check
- Staff Training and Wellness Policy

Sample Staff Resources regarding COVID-19

- Tips to Strengthen Staff Conversations and Concerns About COVID-19
- Coronavirus Memo to Employees
- Taking Care of your Behavioral Health
- Health Risk Disclosure Form

Appendix B: Sample Sign for Entrance



Appendix C: General Resources

How to: Talk to Children about COVID-19

Incorporate developmentally appropriate discussions that help children understand why they need to keep a physical distance and understand what is happening around them. Some resources that may be helpful are:

- [Child Mind Institute: Talking to Kids About Coronavirus](#)
- [PBS: How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus](#)
- [Brains On! Understanding coronavirus and how germs spread](#)
- [Sesame Street in Communities: Comfort Strategies](#)
- [Conscious Discipline: Masks and Gloves Social Story](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Helping Kids Get Used to Masks](#)
- [Why are people wearing masks? Why are people covering their faces?](#)
- [How to Talk about Cloth Face Masks with Children](#)

Mental health Resources from the Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN)

- [Links to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for Local and National Updates, Children and Families, Activities for At-Home Learning, Health and Wellness, and Developmental Disability.](#)
- [Resources for Families](#)
- [Resources for Teachers](#)

Professional development

- **CPR:** If your CPR certification is expiring during this emergency, OSSE is allowing [online CPR training through the American Red Cross](#) from now until 45 days beyond the end of the public health emergency. Online training through the American Red Cross will be accepted for renewals only. This training is self-paced.

Appendix D: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COVID-19 EVENTS

Date	Issuance
Feb. 22	Mayor Bowser issues an Executive Order for the District Government Preparations for the Coronavirus (COVID-19) .
March 11	Mayor issues Mayor's Order 2020-045: Declaration of Public Health Emergency - Coronavirus (COVID-19) and activates the District-wide Child Care Disaster Response Plan .
March 13	OSSE issues Guidance Related to COVID-19: Child Care Provider Closures and Public Funding regarding closure procedures and payment processes for child care providers participating in public funding.
March 24	Mayor Bowser launches an application for the new \$25 million microgrant program to provide relief to local small businesses affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19). This program was created through emergency legislation the DC Council passed on March 17.
March 24	Mayor Bowser issued Mayor's Order 2020-053: Closure of Non-Essential Businesses and Prohibition on Large Gatherings During Public Health Emergency for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) . The Order designated child care providers as “essential businesses” and required temporary closure of the on-site operation of all non-essential businesses and prohibits gatherings of 10 or more people.
March 30	OSSE launched weekly DC Early Childhood Stakeholders Meetings with Superintendent Kang to present new guidance, key updates and answers to questions submitted prior to and during the call.
April 1	OSSE released COVID-19- Child Care Licensing and Compliance Guidance .
April 17	OSSE released updated COVID-19 Child Care Health Guidance required for child care providers operating during the COVID-19 emergency.
April 23	Mayor Bowser announces the ReOpen DC Advisory Group to advise the Mayor to reopen Washington, DC safely and sustainably. The group is made up of a Steering Committee and 11 Sector Committees. Superintendent Kang served on the Advisory Group Education and Child care Committee, providing guidance for reopening and operating child care in the District.
May 12	OSSE releases Guidance Related to COVID-19: Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP) Closures .
May 13	Mayor Muriel Bowser issues Mayor's Order 2020-066 Extensions of Public Emergency and Public Health Emergency and Preparation for Washington, DC Reopening to extend the District’s public emergency and public health emergency and continue to require individuals to stay home through June 8, 2020.
May 21	The ReOpen DC Advisory Group presents recommendations to the Mayor on proposed reopening staging across the 11 key sectors.
June 4	OSSE releases updated Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to COVID-19 .
June 22	OSSE releases updated Child Care Subsidy Guidance
June 22	Mayor Muriel Bowser announces Phase Two of Washington, DC Reopening

Child Care Recovery in the District of Columbia

July 6	OSSE releases the revised Phase Two Health and Safety Guidance for Child Care Providers: COVID-19 Recovery Period
July 14	OSSE issues new Policy on Virtual Licensing Inspections at Child Development Facilities
July 20	OSSE releases Child Care Safety During COVID-19 and What to Expect at Your Child Care Provider During COVID-19 flyers for families
Aug. 3	OSSE issues Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion (PKEEP) Regulations Guidance
Aug. 21	OSSE releases the revised Phase Two Health and Safety Guidance for School