Parents

Accessing Child Care

Q: **Who can access child care?**

Q: **Is there a cost for child care services?**
A: Essential persons, as designated in the Governor’s Executive Order, receive child care services at no cost until June 7, 2020 as it is paid for by the state. Parents not designated as essential persons pay tuition to their child care provider. Beginning June 8, 2020, all parents pay tuition for child care services.

Q: **Do parents designated as essential need to complete a family enrollment form and the other family forms?**
A: Yes, parents designated as essential persons need to complete the family forms and other enrollment documents. These should be used until June 7, 2020. Beginning June 8, 2020 when child care provider’s cease invoicing for child care services, parents should complete all paperwork necessary for licensing and any contracts/forms that the program deems necessary for enrollment.

Q: **Do parents not designated as essential persons need to complete a family enrollment form and the other family forms?**
A: No. Parents not designated as essential persons do not have to complete the EPCC Family Application Form, but they do need to complete all paperwork necessary for licensing and any contracts/forms that the program deems necessary for enrollment.

Q: **Who administers the Essential Personnel Child Care (EPCC) or Essential Personnel School Age (EPSA) programs?**
A: The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) administers these programs.
Q: Does a program need to be licensed to be an EPCC site?
A: Yes, a program must have a current child care center license, letter of compliance, family child care certificate of registration, or large family certificate of registration in order to be an EPCC site. Child care can be provided only in an MSDE approved EPCC site to children of Essential Personnel.

Q: When will all child care programs open to all parents?
A: Child care providers that are approved EPCC or EPSA sites are currently operating. Governor Hogan’s *Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery* outlines three phases in which to safely reopen the state. Opening child care to all parents is part of the second phase of recovery and will be available to all parents at that time. There may still be some restrictions in place for the health and safety of children and staff.

Q: My child care program is closed. Can they apply to be an EPCC site?
A: Yes. Family and Center-based child care programs interested in opening as EPCC sites may contact their licensing specialist. These are the only child care providers allowed to operate.

Q: Are parents that are Essential Personnel or others allowed to access child care and working from home permitted to utilize child care?
A: Since the closure of child care on March 27, 2020, and the subsequent opening of essential personnel child care, currently, only essential personnel and employees of the businesses opened by Governor as part of the Phase I Recovery, are permitted to access child care at this time. If parents/guardians are able, they are strongly urged to keep children at home as the first and best option to protect them from the virus.

Q: Are Essential Personnel who live or work in another state eligible for EPCC and EPSA sites?
A: If a parent lives in Maryland but works in another state as an essential person, they are eligible to be served in EPCC or EPSA. If a parent lives in another state, but works as an essential person in Maryland, they are eligible to be served in EPCC or EPSA. If a parent lives in another state and works as an essential person in another state, they are not eligible to be served in EPCC or EPSA.

Q: Do I need to be prepared to find alternate care if my essential personnel care provider takes back other families?
As child care begins to be available to additional families, some of those families may return to their provider. These providers have contractual obligations and may not be able to continue to serve essential persons. Essential persons who would like to access another provider may find one on our website at [https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/state-funded-child-care-essential-personnel](https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/state-funded-child-care-essential-personnel) or contact LOCATE: Child Care [https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/for-parents/state-funded-child-care-for-essential-personnel-only](https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/for-parents/state-funded-child-care-for-essential-personnel-only), a free service available by phone Monday - Friday at 877-261-0060 between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM. Specialized services for parents of children with special needs, as well as Spanish language, are also available on these platforms.

Q: My child care provider keeps charging me for child care even though I am not attending
(e.g., the program is closed; I am keeping my child safe at home; or I don’t qualify by the Governor’s Executive Orders).

A: We have received several inquiries from families regarding the continued financial responsibility to pay for child care if a facility has closed or if a parent has decided to temporarily discontinue child care services. The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on both families and child care providers. During this time of emergency, we must seek to work collaboratively and strive towards equitable outcomes. MSDE does not oversee child care contracts.

Q: Is child care paid for by the state available to all parents?
A: Child care will continue to be paid for by the state at EPCC and EPSA sites until June 7, 2020 for all essential persons. Parents not defined as essential persons in the Governor’s Executive Order Number 20-03-25-01 will pay tuition or may apply for the Child Care Scholarship program to help meet the cost of child care. Beginning June 8, 2020 EPCC and EPSA providers may not invoice the state, and parents must pay tuition.

Q: How do I apply for the Child Care Scholarship program?
A: The Child Care Scholarship program provides financial assistance with child care costs to eligible working families in Maryland. Parents who earn up to 60% of State Median Income are eligible (e.g., a family of four can have an income of up to $71,525 per year and qualify for a scholarship). To find out more about eligibility and how to apply for the Child Care Scholarship program, see https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/child-care-scholarship-program.

Q: Do parents still need to pay subsidy copays? Is the state still paying vouchers?
A: At this time, all co-pays for the Child Care Scholarship Program are waived. The State is continuing to pay the voucher amounts to all child care providers. Parents, attending child care at this time, would use the scholarship to help meet the cost of child care, but may still be responsible for making up the difference between the scholarship and the tuition unless waived by the provider.

Q: What happens if I use Nannies and Alternative Providers?
A: MSDE does not regulate nannies or alternative providers, so we cannot advise on these matters. In addition, the Governor’s March 13, 2020 Executive Order relaxed some licensing regulations to allow for Family, Friend and Neighbor care for five or fewer school-age students. These options are not funded by the State.

Additional Information

Q: Where can I find the plan for child care in Maryland during the COVID-19 pandemic?
A: Maryland Together: Maryland’s Recovery Plan for Child Care can be found at https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org.

Q: Where can I find additional information?
A: Additional information can be found on our website https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org. You may also e-mail us at earlychildhood.msde@maryland.gov or call us at 410-767-0100.