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Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Child Care

Frequently Asked Questions

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Providers

Access to Child Care

Q: Who can access child care?

A: Any parent may now access child care.

Q: If my jurisdiction has implemented stricter guidance than the state, can I operate my child care with the guidance given to the rest of the state (e.g, serve all parents, increase capacity, etc)?

A: MSDE provides guidance based on MSDE/MDH guidance found here: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/covid-faqs>. However, child care programs must follow local jurisdiction restrictions if more stringent, including from their local health and education offices.

Q: I have not reopened. How do I reopen?

A: Family and Center-based child care programs interested in reopening may contact their licensing specialist and complete a [Child Care Verification of Reopening form](#).

Q: Is there a cost for child care services?

A: Yes. Parents pay tuition for child care services.

Operating a Family or Center-based Child Care Program

Q: How can I purchase food and supplies in bulk?

A: The Maryland State Department of Education has worked with several other agencies to connect with many of the large grocery stores and big box stores across Maryland to request assistance with child care providers having access to purchasing above the limits on certain items and to have access to stores during non-peak hours. Some of the big box stores have also agreed to allow child care providers to use the store without a membership. Most of the stores contacted are willing to work with child care providers, but in different ways. Please use this [letter](#) to contact the manager of your local store to explain the letter and discuss the options they have for you to purchase needed food and supplies. You must have your child care license or registration in addition to the letter when going to the store.

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Q: How do I get Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other medical and emergency supplies?

A: Providers should use their \$800 or \$1,600 grants to purchase medical and other emergency supplies through your normal purchasing practices and supply chains. The federal process for ordering cloth face masks is open for all organizations/facilities. It is not necessary for entities to reach out to local Emergency Management offices as they can go directly to the established website to submit orders without an approval authority. Feel free to widely distribute the link below to those in your jurisdiction looking to order cloth face masks.
<https://asprwgpublic.hhs.gov/aspcc/facecover/Pages/default.aspx>

Q: Are there grants to help new programs purchase cleaning and PPE supplies, as well as on-going disinfecting?

A: Yes. New programs will receive a one-time grant of \$800 for family child care providers and \$1,600 for center-based child care providers. Please note, it may take up to four weeks to receive the grant payments.

Q: Are licensed child care programs now opening eligible for the \$2,000 grants that were given to EPCC providers previously?

A: No. These grants were only available to providers participating in the Essential Personnel Child Care (EPCC) and Essential Personnel School Age (EPSA) programs approved to serve essential persons by April 24, 2020. The EPCC and EPSA programs ended on July 20, 2020.

Q: Are there capacity limits in child care?

A: Yes. Class sizes in child care centers are now expanded to a maximum of 15 individuals at a time per classroom with a ratio of no more than 1 teacher for 14 children ages three and above. This is a temporary relaxing of the regulations. Family child care and large family child care programs are limited to the number of children for which they are currently approved and for which are reflected on their certificate of registration. However, this number may be impacted due to the additional requirement that there should be no more than 15 people on the premises at one time, including residents of the home. Providers may serve different children on different days. If they are licensed for evening care and weekends, they can serve additional children in the evening shift, however they must clean and disinfect thoroughly between shifts. *All child care programs must continue to adhere to group size allowed for by age in licensing regulations.*

Q: Can I provide unlicensed family, friend and neighbor care in my home?

A: No. However, a family child care home is not required to be registered if the provider is (a) a relative of each child; or (b) a friend of each child's parent or legal guardian and the care is provided on a non-regular basis of less than 20 hours a month (COMAR 13A.15.02). Family and friend providers wishing to continue to provide child care services should contact their regional licensing office to become a licensed family child care provider. Information on licensing can be found here: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/licensing>.

Q: Can I serve the maximum group size in spaces in large rooms sectioned off by half-walls, partitions, and other barriers?

A: Yes. You may use large rooms sectioned off by half-walls and other barriers if that is how you operated previous to COVID-19. You must continue to adhere to MSDE/MDH guidance. You may not section off a classroom that is measured for 20 children by using portable dividers or other barriers. Children in these classrooms should be kept away from the half-wall and other barriers separating the classrooms as often as possible so there is minimal contact.

Q: What health and safety guidance should I follow?

A: All child care providers must adhere to the MSDE/MDH guidance based on CDC guidance, which can be found on our website: <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/covid-faqs>.

Q: Can I accept children in the Child Care Scholarship program?

A: Only licensed child care programs participating in Maryland EXCELS or registered informal care provider may accept vouchers from families in Child Care Scholarship program, and the program must be at Levels 3, 4 and 5 receive tiered reimbursements. Unfortunately, MSDE does not have funding to expand the child care scholarship program for school age students, regardless of whether they are from income-eligible families. For school-age children who need child care during the school year, the child care scholarship can only be used for before and/or after school care. Only a 1 Unit or 2 Unit child care scholarship will be issued for school-age children during the school year. To find out more about the Child Care Scholarship program, see <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/child-care-scholarship-program>.

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.