To: Licensed Child Care Providers  
From: Steven R. Hicks  
Assistant State Superintendent  
Division of Early Childhood  
Subject: Clarification on Child Care Operating Procedures during COVID-19 Pandemic in Stage Three  
Date: October 1, 2020

MSDE is providing this clarification on child care operating procedures with the State of Maryland’s advancement into Stage Three of Governor Hogan’s Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery and in reference to the September 24, 2020 MSDE press release. This aligns with the Maryland Together: Maryland’s Recovery Plan for Child Care.

After consultation with leading public health experts, child care providers may now return to their licensed capacity as long they adhere to the health and safety guidance, COVID-19 GUIDANCE for Child Care Facilities, which can be found in both English and Spanish on the Division of Early Childhood website: https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/covid-faqs. A return to licensed capacities requires child staff ratios per COMAR regulations. If a classroom currently has a group size of 14 children with one staff based on the relaxation of regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a program may not add additional children to the classroom until an additional qualified staff person is assigned to the classroom. A group size of 14 children with one staff will be permitted only until October 30, 2020.

As of September 30, 2020, the federal waiver of the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Reauthorization for the completion of an 8-point background check for all persons before they are approved to work in a child care facility, has expired. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal Office of Child Care has allowed states, including Maryland, to request another 1-year waiver of this requirement. While Maryland awaits approval of this waiver, staff may continue to work in child care with completion of a state or FBI criminal background check and a cleared Maryland Child Protective Service clearance as long as they are “watchdogged”, meaning they are supervised by a person who has completed a full 8-point background check. Once Maryland receives the decision regarding the waiver request, all providers will receive notification.

All child care providers may reopen by contacting their licensing specialist and complete a Child Care Verification of Reopening form. Reopened 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. The last day to reopen and receive a stipend is October 31, 2020.

Please note, that child care programs applying for grants from the Division of Early Childhood (e.g., accreditation, quality improvement, etc.) must have completed a Child Care Verification of Reopening form and reopened in order to be eligible to receive funding.

Thank you for your continued service as essential persons providing child care for Maryland’s families.