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State Superintendent of Schools

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.