Early Childhood
IMPROVING SCHOOL READINESS

# Early Childhood COVID-19 Updates
# 3.15.2020

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

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# Proclamation Update

The Governor issued Proclamation JBE 2020-27 on March 13, 2020.

- All public schools in the State of Louisiana shall close facilities to students until April 13, 2020.
- Schools may offer complete distance learning, as capabilities exist.
- With appropriate social distancing measures, schools shall, if able, continue to provide meals or other essential services with applicable staff.
- Instructional minute requirements shall be temporarily suspended for distance education courses and for curriculum delivery.
- The required 63,720 instructional minute requirement per year shall also be suspended.
- **NOTE:** the prohibition against all gatherings of 250 people or more (who are in a single space at the same time where individuals will be in close proximity to one another) does not apply to licensed centers.

# Louisiana's Response
## COVID-19

*The Louisiana Department of Education continues to closely monitor the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. This webinar contains a collection of information about COVID-19, as well as resources for educators and families. All resources will be updated on an ongoing basis.*

- The LDOE has created a dedicated page on its website focused on preventing and responding to COVID-19 in schools and early learning centers.
- All information and resources, including the FAQ documents, will be continually updated.
- Child care centers are **not** included in the governor's executive order. Sites should make closure decisions in coordination with local public health contact.
- The Louisiana Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites also maintain updated information about COVID-19, prevention, and occurrences.
- For education-specific information, contact the LDOE at LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov.

# *NEW* Updated Guidance for Centers

*The LDOE will continue to work closely with the governor's office, GOSHEP, and LDH to provide centers with the most up to date guidance.*

- Please urge families to stay home whenever possible
- Prioritize child care for families most in need, including people required to work on COVID-19 response (i.e., healthcare workers, emergency responders)
- If you stay open, please check the temperature of everyone in your center using a thermometer that does not touch skin
  - Note: a temperature of 100.4 typically indicates a fever, but this can vary for young children
  - Follow your center protocol
- Clean high-touch surfaces ideally every 30 minutes, but at least 1-2 times during the day

# *NEW* Updated Guidance for Centers

## Memo from Governor John Bel Edwards

Governor Edward's proclamation which referenced school closures from March 13, 2020 to April 13, 2020 does affect those programs administered by the Louisiana Department of Education, but not affect daycares and early learning centers run by private entities. These facilities and programs can continue unless otherwise informed as the situation progresses. We do, however, encourage the following guidance for all privately administered Daycare Programs and Early Learning Centers:

- Encourage children who can stay home to do so.
- Children and Staff should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently.
- Limit child grouping.  Encourage frequent environmental cleaning.
- Any child with fever or cold symptoms should not participate in these programs for the duration of their illness. Only well children should attend.
- Staff members in high-risk (elderly, those with medical conditions) should be encouraged to stay home.

# Closures

# Closures
## Decision-making

*Early learning centers make individual decisions about whether or not to close their businesses, in consultation with local health officials.*

- Louisiana Department of Health has recommended the first step in determining to close an early childhood center is to consult the Office of Public Health Regional Contacts.
- When center closures are necessary, notify LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov and note the center name, license number, location, and details of the closure.
- When planning to reopen, notify LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov and note the center name, license number, location, and date of reopening.
- Review the LDOE's webpage on COVID-19.
- Communicate clearly to staff and families regarding your plan for handling tuition and payroll during any closure.

# Licensing Updates

# Licensing Updates
## Deciding to Stay Open

*Should you decide to stay open, there is guidance to prepare you to operate in these conditions.*

The Center for Disease Control has guidelines for businesses to consider:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and teach children to do the same.
- Emphasize staying home when sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily

There is a nationwide shortage of supplies, including cleaning solutions. Centers should follow CDC guidance on cleaning and hygiene. Please track expenditures and keep all receipts related to COVID-19 in the event funds become available to support these costs.

# Licensing Updates
## Deciding to Stay Open

*Should you decide to stay open, there is guidance to prepare you to operate in these conditions.*

Additionally, centers should take all mitigating precautions when serving children, including:

- Take the temperature of staff and children using a thermometer that does not touch skin, and check for illness when children arrive
  - Note: a temperature of 100.4 typically indicates a fever, but this can vary for young children
  - Follow your center protocol
- Consider activities that mitigate large groups
  - For example, when possible, have children eat in individual classrooms
- Accommodate older or medically at-risk employees
- Limit visitors as possible
- Clean high-touch surfaces ideally every 30 minutes, but at least 1-2 times during the day

# Licensing Updates
## License Renewals

*March, April, and May license renewals will be extended.*

Licenses will be extended for 90 days for providers whose licenses expire in March, April, and May 2020.

- March renewals will be extended to June.
- April renewals will be extended to July.
- May renewals will be extended to August.

Annual inspections will be postponed or delayed with a focus on complaints and incidents. Delays of annual inspections by the Office of State Fire Marshal and the Office of Public Health will not negatively affect license renewals.

# Licensing Updates
## Change Requests

*Change requests to accommodate out of school children or additional children.*

- Early learning centers **do not** need to submit a change request in CAFE to accommodate out of school children or additional children.

- Early learning centers can make change requests to their Licensing Consultant via email for the following:
  - Age range
  - Hours of operation

# Licensing Updates
## Allowances to adjust for staffing

*Additional allowances to provide flexibility regarding staffing.*

The Department will:

- Extend time for approval for license renewals from the Office of State Fire Marshal and Office of Public Health from 90 days of the date of the license expiration to 120 days from the date of the license expiration.
- Adjust the child-to-staff minimum ratio for ages 3 years and older to allow centers to adapt for staffing.
- Decrease the staff age requirement from 18 years or older to include 16 and 17 year olds to be included in the child-to-staff ratio if the person works under the direct supervision of an adult staff member.
- Waive continuing education requirements (i.e. clock hours) and proof of documentation requirements.

# Licensing Updates
## Child-to-staff ratios

*This is the first step in addressing child:staff ratios.*

| **Minimum Child-to-staff Ratios for Early Learning Centers (effective March 14, 2020 through April 30, 2020, unless terminated sooner by the Superintendent.)** | |
|---|---|
| **Ages of Children** | **Ratio** |
| 3 years | 16:1 |
| 4 years | 18:1 |
| 5 years | 24:1 |
| 6 years and up | 29:1 |

# Licensing Updates
## Maximum Group Sizes

*Centers should strive to maintain current group size standards or lower if possible.This narrow waiver should only be utilized for abrupt staffing changes.*

| **Maximum Group Sizes for Early Learning Centers (effective March 14, 2020 through April 30, 2020, unless terminated sooner by the Superintendent.)** | |
|---|---|
| **Ages of Children** | **Maximum Group Size** |
| 3 years | 33 |
| 4 years | 37 |
| 5 years | 45 |
| 6 years and up | 55 |

# *NEW* Licensing Updates

## Responses to Questions on Licensed Capacity

*At this time, no changes will be made to centers' licensed capacity or family child care providers' maximum number of children enrolled.*

Centers should continue to adhere to their licensed capacity in determining the number of children they can enroll.

Family child care providers will continue to be required to have no more than six unrelated children in their care.

# *NEW* Licensing Updates

## Responses to Questions on Employing 16 and 17 Year Olds

*The Department will decrease the staff age requirement from 18 years or older to include 16 and 17 year olds if the person works under the direct supervision of an adult staff member.*

BESE has approved a waiver until June 30, 2020 allowing a center to employ staff ages 16 or 17, as long as they are under the direct supervision of a current employee.

These new 16 and 17 year old employees may count for the purposes of ratios.

# *NEW* Licensing Update

## Responses to Questions on Licensing Temporary Spaces

*Temporary child care centers can be set up to support emergency response, and the LDOE will work with you to license the space.*

Expanded care should only be created to support emergency or critical response personnel, or employees who support necessary services. If emergency care is needed to support response to COVID-19, providers can establish a temporary child care center in a church or other buildings and LDOE will work with you to license this space.

Note that providers should keep in mind the recommendations regarding social distancing and take all mitigating precautions.

Please contact the Division of Licensing by phone at 225.342.9905 or by email at ldelicensing@la.gov for more information.

# *NEW* Licensing Updates
## Miscellaneous Licensing Questions

**Q: Can centers require that parents sign waivers to ensure centers are not held responsible if a child comes into contact with COVID-19 at the center?**

A: Centers should consult their attorneys in consideration of any waivers.

**Q: Can centers implement a procedure requiring parents to drop children at the door, allowing staff to sign children in and out?**

A: Yes. The center must have staff members signing the children in and out and adequate staff escorting children to and from their classrooms.

# Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC)

# Child Care Criminal Background Checks (CCCBC)

*The CCCBC staff will continue to process background checks and provide updates of fingerprint services as the situation requires.*

BESE has temporarily waived the following:

- Requirement of documentation of CCCBC eligibility determinations
- The LDOE $15.00 CCCBC admin fee
- The LDOE $15.00 out of state fee

Importantly, those individuals that have previously been determined ineligible or for whom you receive notice of ineligibility are prohibited from being on the premises.

CCCBC questions should be sent directly to valerie.black@la.gov.

# *NEW* Child Care Criminal Background Checks (CCCBC)

## Responses to Questions on Fingerprint Locations

The Department has not received any notice of fingerprint location closures, and the Departments staff will be diligently processing CCCBC applications.

- If a fingerprint location has closed in your area, please notify valerie.black@la.gov.

# *NEW* Child Care Criminal Background Checks (CCCBC)

## Responses to Questions on CCCBC documentation

- Prior to starting work a new employee must apply and be fingerprinted for a CCCBC.
- The requirement to provide proof to the Division of Licensing has been waived until April 30, 2020.

# *NEW* CCCBC Updates

## Responses to Questions on Employing Substitutes

- K-12 substitute pools vary by community, so you should contact your local K-12 substitute staffing organization directly to access.

- Additionally, schools may have relationships with regular substitutes who you may be able to partner with, as well as staff  from closed centers and others in your community who may be able to serve as additional staff in child care centers.

- Prior to starting work, a new employee must apply and be fingerprinted for a CCCBC if they do not already have one.

# *NEW* CCCBC Updates

## Responses to Questions on Volunteers

The child care provider should apply for a CCCBC for the volunteer through the CCCBC System. If there are any hurdles in applying for the CCCBC contact valerie.black@la.gov.

# Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

# Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
## Payments and eligibility

*The Department will pay for enrollment versus attendance, and provide flexibility for families regarding redetermination periods and reporting requirements.*

**The Department will:**

- Pay all authorized children the full weekly amount regardless of the number of days or hours they attended. (*Full-Time will receive 22 units monthly, Part-Time will receive 20 hours weekly*)
- Waive CCAP copayments for families
- Extend family redeterminations for 3 months
- Extend reporting deadlines for eligibility determinations

# *NEW* Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

## Responses to Questions on Family Determination

*Families can continue to apply for CCAP through CAFE, and applications are being expedited.*

Families who are interested in utilize the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) can continue to apply in the CAFE portal.

Families can apply for CCAP for their school-aged children in addition to children under the age of five.

# *NEW* Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

## Response to Questions Related to Report of Changes

**The following changes can be made for children funded through CCAP:**

- Change authorization from part time to full time
- Add CCAP authorization for sibling
- Change to a different CCAP authorized center for a child authorized for CCAP

Families should take **one** of the following steps:

- complete a CCAP 10 Report of Changes form
- email LDECCAP@la.gov with the request to change the authorization
- call 1-877-453-2721 with the request to change the authorization

Child care centers and providers can begin serving these children as full time immediately, but you will not be reimbursed until the parent changes the authorization.

# *NEW* Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

## Responses to Questions on 2019 Maximum State Rates

*With CCAP copays waived, families will be subsidized at 100 percent of the 2019 Maximum State Rate level (shown below). Providers can charge the difference between rates and their tuition.*

| Provider Type | Age 3 and up | Age 1-2 (Toddlers) | Age 0 (Infant) | Special Needs Age 3 and up | Special Needs Age 1-2 (Toddlers) | Special Needs Age 0 (Infant) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type III Early Learning Center | $22.00 | $23.75 | $25.00 | $27.72 | $29.93 | $31.50 |
| School Child Care Center | $16.50 | $16.50 | $16.50 | $20.79 | $20.79 | $20.79 |
| Family Home Provider | $17.00 | $18.00 | $18.00 | $21.42 | $22.68 | $22.68 |
| In Home Provider | $17.50 | $17.50 | $17.50 | $22.05 | $22.05 | $22.05 |
| Military Child Care Center | $22.00 | $23.75 | $25.00 | $27.72 | $29.93 | $31.50 |

# *NEW* Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

## Example of zero copayment

*If the family has a copay of $2, $3, $8, or $10, it will be waived. They will receive the maximum rate for the age of their child according to the 2019 State Maximum Levels chart. An example of how the payment will change for a family that has a $3 copay is below:*

| | Daily Rate and Standard Copay | Daily Rate and *NEW* Copay Waived |
|---|---|---|
| Provider Charge for Toddlers | $31.00 | $31.00 |
| State Max CCAP Rate for Toddlers | $23.75 | $23.75 |
| Required Copay for Family | ***$3.00*** | ***$0.00*** |
| Total CCAP Payment to Provider | **$20.75** | **$23.75** |
| Total Family Payment to Provider | **$10.25** | **$7.25** |

# *NEW* Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

## Responses to Questions on Payments for Closures

*The Department will continue CCAP payments for enrolled CCAP children in the event that a center closes as a result of COVID 19.*

In the event of a center closure, CCAP payments will continue in order to support centers to pay staff.

Payments will be based on enrollment, meaning centers will be paid for CCAP authorized children the full weekly amount regardless of the number of days or hours they attended.

This means that full-time children will be paid for 22 days or units monthly, and part-time will be paid for 20 hours weekly.

# Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

## TOTS machines

**If a lead agency closes a building where TOTS machines are located, they must inform LDOE by email at LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov.**

- The LDOE will keep the TOTS locations list updated in the event Heads of Household are looking for a TOTS location.
- If a family is not able to access a location in their area, the Provider must keep manual attendance records until the TOTS location is open again.
- Contact the Provider Help Desk (225-342-1879 or 225-342-7414) or Call Center (1-877-453-2721) for individual questions.

**The use of TOTS finger imaging is strongly encouraged to continue to the extent possible but not required.**

# Child Care Support Organizations

# Child Care Support Organizations
## Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agencies

The Department will notify CCR&Rs of closures in their areas daily.

**All CCR&Rs can:**

- suspend in-person coaching and switch to virtual coaching methods.
- move in-person group trainings and meetings to virtual formats as possible.

**All CCR&Rs should:**

- prioritize supporting centers that remain open.
- assist parents in finding alternative childcare options within centers that remain open.
- refer center directors to the LDOE FAQs for up-to-date guidance.

CCR&Rs may be requested to provide respite care services in needed locations, including hospitals. Please begin thinking about possible partnerships, and reach out to the LDOE regarding opportunities in your community. If respite care is provided, CCR&Rs will be paid.

# Child Care Support Organizations
## Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Programs

Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program Providers may choose to move classes to a virtual (rather than in-person) format. Please email LDOECOVID19support@la.gov if your program moves to online instruction.

If your program chooses to pause instruction, please communicate this to LDOECOVID19support@la.gov

Continue to send tuition invoices on regular timelines.

Job-embedded coaching should be suspended until April 13, 2020.

# LA 4 and NSECD

# LA 4 and NSECD
## Payments and Reporting

- During school closures, LA-4 and NSECD payments will continue based on enrollment. When schools reopen, additional COVID19 related absences are considered excused absences.
- Please submit NSECD and LA-4 invoices by the 10th of each month to ensure prompt payment.
- LA-4 and NSECD attendance tracking should mark the school closures in the same manner used for normal school closures for weather, holiday, etc.
- If your teams are unable to submit invoices for LA-4 and NSECD due to COVID19 hardships, please lindsey.bradford@la.gov .

# Food Services

# Food Services
## CACFP and Centers

*Families with children under the age of 18 will be able to go to a designated list of school sites around the state to access free meals.*

USDA has provided flexibilities to schools to provide meals to children 18 years and under during the extended closure.

USDA has not provided the same flexibility to serve additional children through CACFP, although the Congressional House bill provides for non-congregant feeding. As additional flexibilities are approved, we will let you know.

The Department will maintain a list of schools providing feeding programs during the closure. This list will be continually updated with schools and other organizations providing open feeding programs. If a center closes, it should refer families to programs on this list.

With questions related to food and nutrition programs, please contact the LDOE Division of Nutrition Support at ChildNutritionPrograms@la.gov.

# *NEW* Food Services

## Food Shortages

*In the event of food shortages, please direct families to the list of schools providing food services to children under 18 years old.*

The Department will maintain a list of schools providing open feeding programs for children 18 years of age and younger during the closure. If a center closes, it should refer families to programs on this list. The Department will provide updates on mass feeding programs facilitated by the state as they become available.

# Academic Resources

# Academic Resources
## Standards and Development

*In the event of school or center closure, families may find the following resources helpful in facilitating learning at home.*

- Louisiana's Birth to Five Early Learning & Development Standards (ELDS) describe the particular skills and abilities that children need to develop to be successful and provide ideas for fostering their development.
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers research-based resources, tips and ideas for families—from child development to reading, writing, music, math, and more!

# Academic Resources
## Text Services

*Several programs are available to offer tips and resources for families that support early learning through text messages.*

- Bright by Text provides quality information and trusted resources to families of children prenatal to age eight partnering with LPB. Text: LPB to 274448
- Vroom offers free, easy-to-use learning tips for children 5 and under delivered daily directly to your phone. Sign up for free at https://www.vroom.org/.
- Ready4K is an evidence-based family engagement curriculum delivered via text messages. Text: Readby4th to 70138

** Message & data rates apply.*

# Academic Resources
## Online Learning

*Frog Street's partner, Education technology provider Age of Learning, is offering families at schools and centers affected by closure free at-home access to research-proven learning resources.*

- ABCmouse.com® Early Learning Academy is a comprehensive, research-validated curriculum for children 2-8. Visit www.ABCmouse.com/redeem and redeem your access code.
- ReadingIQ® is a digital library and literacy platform for children 2-12 designed by reading experts to improve literacy skills. Visit www.ReadingIQ.com/redeem and redeem your access code.

Families can use the redeem code: **SCHOOL3673** to sign up. Questions can be sent to support@aofl.com

# Academic Resources
## Online Learning

In partnership with **Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB)**, the Department will provide distance and home learning tools for educators, students, and caregivers. This will include:

- **An online hub for distance learning supports** set to launch by March 18. It will include:
  - Department-reviewed lessons and resources for math, ELA, social studies, science and early childhood, including links to Tier 1 curriculum resources.
  - Increased access to Tier 1 curriculum digital content, including virtual lessons.
  - Resources to teach young children about COVID-19.

- **Broadcasted educational programming** through LPB and YouTube Channels, which will launch within the next two weeks.

The Department will announce the availability of these resources through all upcoming planning calls and newsletters.

# Academic Resources
## Special Education

**School closure.** When the school closure causes educational services for all students to pause within a school or school system, then the school/school system is generally not required to provide services to children with disabilities during the closure. This includes children with disabilities ages 3, 4, and 5 who have an IEP.

After an extended closure, school systems are responsible for reviewing how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services on each child. If the child lost progress, teams will need to reassess services and determine whether the child requires compensatory education.

US Department of Education Q&A on special education has additional information, including information on Early Steps / IDEA Part C for infants and toddlers, and Distance Education.

# Academic Resources
## Family Guidance during Emergencies

*Closures will result in changes in routine and some anxiety for children. Share these resources with families to support their conversations with young children.*

Parent and Caretaker guide for helping families cope with COVID 19

Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus

Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus) - A Parent Resource (English Resource)

Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus) - A Parent Resource (Spanish Resource)

# Accountability

# Accountability
## Local and Third Party Observations

*The Department is suspending all local and third party CLASS observations until April 13.*

Out of an abundance of caution, the Department is suspending CLASS® observations from taking place in schools and centers until school systems reopen on April 13, 2020.

BESE has approved a Bulletin 140 waiver to extend the deadline for the spring observation period until May 31, 2020.

If observations are unable to occur in centers and schools by this deadline, the Department will work with programs and lead agencies to determine how to calculate performance ratings.

# Accountability
## Issuing Performance Profiles & Star Ratings

*The Department will work with BESE to request a Bulletin 140 waiver to extend performance profiles for severely impacted sites.*

85% of sites have already received all required observations for their 2019-2020 school year and will receive their performance profiles and star ratings without interruption.

The Department will request a Bulletin 140 waiver to extend performance profile ratings for an additional year if any sites do not receive the required observations due to COVID-19 interruptions in order to ensure School Readiness Tax Credits for 2021 are not impacted.

# Workforce

# Workforce
## Preparing to support your staff

*Taking care of your teachers and finances is key to resuming business when this has passed.*

- The Governor's proclamation offers flexibility around unemployment, which may be relevant to you. Look to the Louisiana Workforce Commission for unemployment supports.
- Ensure that you have family and staff contact information and emergency contacts.
- All staff should have direct deposit set up, or an alternate plan for receiving pay. Share your plan for payment and sick leave policies with staff, and any flexibility you will allow for pay.
- Consider developing a list of work-from-home tasks that your staff can engage in to continue moving your work forward.
- Look into resources from the Small Business Association, including COVID-19 specific loans.
- Review your insurance and business interruption policies, and consider filing a claim, even if there is a virus exclusion.

**A survey will soon be made available to collect information on financial issues child care centers are facing due to COVID-19, in order to partner with organizations to provide support.**

# Legal and Regulatory Flexibilities

# Legal and Regulatory Flexibilities

- BESE has approved an initial round of waivers: BESE Emergency Waiver Memo
- Additional regulation may be requested as necessary.

# Next Steps

# Next Steps
## Guidance and Communications

- All guidance will be linked here, including these slides: https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/covid-19
- Email any questions to LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov
- Check the ECE FAQ and the School System FAQ, which are updated in the afternoon each day
- **Please email any closures as soon as possible to the support inbox.**