



NEWSLETTER

News for Early Childhood Educators

May 7, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

This week, educators across the nation are being celebrated as part of [Teacher Appreciation Week](#). If there is ever a time to recognize the creativity, dedication, and life-changing power of teachers, it is now, as the ongoing public health crisis forces us to rethink the ways we care and educate our children. Despite these uncertain and unprecedented times, Louisiana early childhood teachers have gone above and beyond. For all of this—and for the work they do every day for our children—we owe them our gratitude.

To sustain the progress Louisiana has made as a state and to prepare for a strong start to the 2020-2021 school year, it is critical that early childhood communities take steps to support the child care sector and to ensure that children continue to learn and thrive.

- **All child care centers have the tools and resources they need to reopen safely** and in accordance with Office of Public Health guidelines.
- **Communities sustain and/or increase access** to opportunities for early childhood care and education in the near and long-term.
- **Teachers are prepared to lead classrooms and provide high-quality interactions** for children every day.
- **Families are supported to re-enroll** children in early childhood programs, **or to provide quality care and education in their homes** if programs are unable to reopen or remain open.

Information regarding the Early Childhood 2020 Strong Start was presented during a [webinar](#) earlier today. If you would like to provide feedback to the Department's strategy, please complete the survey by close of business Friday, May 8. A separate survey has been created for [providers](#) and [lead agencies and CCR&Rs](#).

We look forward to working with you to ensure a strong start to a strong future.

In service,

Beth Scioneaux
Acting State Superintendent
Twitter @La_Believes

In This Issue

- [COVID-19 Updates](#)
- [Updates for Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Updates for Funding and Enrollment](#)
- [Updates for Licensed Centers](#)
- [Updates for Child Care Criminal Background Checks](#)
- [Updates for Directors](#)
- [Updates for Lead Agencies](#)
- [Other](#)
- [Early Childhood in the News](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Upcoming Deadlines

- *Academic Approval- due May 1- past due*
- *Lead Agency RFA Notice of Intent- extended to May 15*

More Important Dates

Please see the [LDOE School System Support Calendar](#).

COVID-19 Updates

New: Expanded SNAP Benefits

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 enables temporary emergency standards of eligibility and levels of benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008. Children who would receive free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Act if school facilities were currently open are eligible for benefits. This includes all students attending a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school.

To receive these benefits, families must complete an application. Without the requested information, the Department of Children and Family Services cannot issue the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card and provide benefits.

The anticipated launch of the application is set for the week of May 18. The Department will publicize the eligibility of these benefits, and in an effort to ensure families receive these benefits during this challenging time, school systems will receive communications to share with eligible families the week of May 11.

Please contact kim.nesmith@la.gov with questions.

Office of Public Health Guidelines for Centers

The Office of Public Health and the Department of Education developed required and suggested [guidelines](#) for child care centers to use as they reopen, informed by the latest guidance from the CDC. Per the White House's Reopening America plan, Louisiana will be reopening in Phases as the state meets certain criteria. Throughout these phases, restrictions will be gradually relaxed. In order to ensure the health and safety of children and staff, centers will be expected to follow the guidelines detailed in this [document](#).

Noggin Cares

Last month, The Department announced its [partnership with Noggin](#), Nickelodeon's learning service for children age 2 and above, to offer a free, three-month subscription to families. The app is loaded with read-aloud e-books, learning games, songs, and other engaging content. It also provides ideas for off-screen family activities, and special content to help young children cope during this time.

Noggin asked the Surgeon General of California and other leading experts how to handle the stress of the pandemic on little kids. With help from Jamie-Lynn Sigler, a mom and superstar host, and parents, this 20-minute special will help answer questions about children's health and learning during this challenging time.

Watch Navigating the New Normal: Parents Edition, available beginning Thursday, May 7. Learn more at www.noggin.com/kidstogether

Market Rate Survey

Given the difficulties that the COVID-19 closures have caused for child care centers, the Early Childhood team has decided to close the Market Rate Survey. The Department is committed to considering these recent changes and plans to gather additional information about the impact on centers at a later date. Please look for more information about next steps in the coming months.

Any questions regarding the survey can be directed to robyn.stiles@emergentmethod.com.

Updates for Teaching and Learning

Reminder: 2020 Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series

The Louisiana Department of Education is shifting the 2020 Teacher Leader Summit from its in-person format to a series of **free interactive webinars** for as many sessions as possible.

The 2020 Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series will take place from **May 28 to June 5**. It will bring together a host of educators and content experts who are focused on creating meaningful growth for every student, every day. Educators will share their knowledge, learn new skills, and prepare for the 2020-2021 school year.

Last week, the Department released the [draft session list](#). It includes a variety of sessions for teachers, schools, providers, and early childhood stakeholders. The Department will open up the Teacher Leader

Summit app, Sched, on May 13 allowing registrants to build their specific schedules at that time. To ensure the sessions remain interactive, sessions will have capacity limits. As with the in-person event, all sessions will be first come, first served.

Due to popular demand, all tickets for The Virtual Series were reserved within 24 hours; however, the Department is excited to announce that the cap has been raised. [Registration](#) will remain open through **June 5**.

Please contact ldoeevents@la.gov with questions.

Continuous Learning Resources

This month, the Department released a guidance document that walks families step-by-step through the process of creating a productive daily schedule, including tips and sample schedules, along with age-appropriate, play-based learning activities to enhance that schedule. The guidance document also includes lists of academic resources for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.

The family guidance document accompanies the [Continuous Learning Toolkit](#), which includes the [academic resources](#) guide. The guide intended to help support early childhood educators and families plan for continuous learning using high-quality instructional materials and resources. Updates are made as new information from vendors is made available.

Recent updates to the [Academic Resources](#) document include:

- [Frog Street for Young Learners](#) offers access to over 250 electronic books, activities, and songs from their curriculum. Access to these collections is **FREE** during school closures due to COVID-19.
- All Teaching Strategies GOLD® teachers now have access to The Creative Curriculum®, [Digital Curriculum Resources](#) at no additional cost through June 30. More information can be found in Teaching Strategies' [press release](#) and [YouTube video](#).
- Teaching Strategies is supporting parents and families at home by offering access to their newest digital product, [ParentPal™](#), at no cost through June 30, 2020. [ParentPal™](#) promotes active, engagement and developmentally appropriate milestone progress from birth through age 3.

GOLD® Updated Guidance

Due to COVID-19, the Department waived the May checkpoint requirement. Therefore, sites do not need to take any action in order to finalize the current academic year. If there is a specific situation where a teacher needs to close out, please check *not observed* and the reason being *site closure*.

Questions regarding GOLD® can be directed to meredith.eckard@la.gov.

Updates for Funding and Enrollment

eScholar/DirectMatch

The eScholar DirectMatch system will be down for system maintenance beginning tomorrow, May 8 through Monday, May 11. We apologize for any inconvenience.

DirectMatch

This year, the Department is requiring that all community networks gain access to DirectMatch which allows networks a quick, easy, contact-free method for determining child eligibility. The LDOE is offering Technical Assistance sessions for anyone who would like a one-on-one hands on training in how to access and use the system. Sessions can be scheduled [here](#).

Please reach out to lindsey.bradford@la.gov for access or with any questions.

LA 4/NSECD

During school closures, LA 4 and NSECD payments have continued based on enrollment rather than attendance.

- All LA 4 State General Funds payments through May have been issued as of April 21.
- TANF payments for March, April and May are pending with DCFS.
- All NSECD payments through May have been issued as of May 1.

Any questions regarding LA 4 or NSECD can be directed to lindsey.bradford@la.gov

Child Care Assistance Program

Essential employees are eligible for CCAP subsidies for child care . If your center is temporarily closed, but you would like to offer care to essential employees, you may be interested in providing care as a Family Child Care or In-Home Provider. If interested, learn more [here](#). For questions regarding CCAP, please contact LDECCAP@la.gov.

Louisiana Child Care Assistance Provider (LaCAP) Relief Grants

The Department has released LaCAP Relief Grant funds to providers. Providers were contacted by phone and informed of the disbursement and of how the grant amount was calculated. Upon receipt of the grant funding, providers agree to prioritize children of first responders and emergency personnel, serve CCAP children, use health and safety practices that prevent the spread of COVID-19 as directed by the local and state health departments and LDOE.

Funds will be used for expenses associated with the child care facility and its daily operations. Records and receipts of expenses must be retained and accessible to LDOE staff and other authorized personnel. Personal use of grant funds and construction are strictly prohibited. If determined funds were misused, the applicant, including the owner, and board of directors (if applicable), will be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

For additional questions, please email LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov or LDECCAP@la.gov for the Provider Help Desk.

Updates for Licensed Centers

License Renewal Applications for May Providers

The CAFÉ Provider Portal is currently down, preventing the submission of CAFÉ Renewal Applications. In order to process your application, please complete the Renewal Application using the form that will be emailed to you. Providers with March renewals who have not completed their application should do so by using the emailed form.

Please include the following with the Renewal Application form:

- Current approval from Office of Public Health,
- Current approval from Office of State Fire Marshal,
- Current approval from City Fire (if applicable),
- Current General Liability Insurance
- LDE Office of Early Childhood Academic Approval (if Type III center)

If you have any questions, contact your Licensing Consultant at 225-342-9905 or ldelicensing@la.gov.

Urgent Communications needed during COVID-19

Please let Licensing know if your center is temporarily closed. If your center is still open, please take this [survey](#). The Department is working hard to be sure essential employees have their child care needs covered during this unprecedented time. Remember to report any updates regarding closures or center reopenings to LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov.

Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC) Updates

Please refer to the updated list of [fingerprint locations](#), last revised May 5, and call ahead before sending applicants to be fingerprinted. Please contact LDECCCBCprocessing@la.gov with any CCCBC questions. The LDOE \$15.00 administrative fee, out of state fee, and the DCFS fee have been waived for the CCCBC application until May 31. Fingerprint fees must still be paid prior to being fingerprinted.

Updates for Directors

Applications for the Louisiana Early Leaders Academy (LELA) Now Open

Now, more than ever, early learning leaders need support to bring forth an ambitious vision for Louisiana's youngest. As center directors consider what the future may hold, the Louisiana Early Leaders Academy offers the opportunity to build leadership skills and a network of peers who support each other for their success and most importantly, ambitious goals for young children.

Year One fellows report that this program is transformative. Learn more through this short promotional [video](#) or by visiting the [LELA website](#).

Whether you are currently open or not, if you are a Type III center rated Proficient or Above, you are [eligible to apply](#). The deadline for applications is May 22.

The Leaders Academy is structured to provide and support the implementation of new learning into practice, including:

- Bi-monthly online training sessions;
- Personal coaching with an individualized focus;
- A community of peers; and
- Exclusive opportunities to learn from national and state leaders in early childhood education.

Please email emmy.odwyer@la.gov if you have any questions.



Connect. Lead. Learn

Updates for Lead Agencies

Request for Applications for Community Network Lead Agencies 2020

The Department is releasing the [Lead Agency Request for Application 2020](#) which designates a lead agency to each community network to coordinate essential administrative activities, observations, and enrollment.

Lead Agency RFA Timeline:

- **Release date:** April 23
- **Informational Webinar:** May 5 (Weekly Webinar)
- **Intent to Apply:** Extended to May 15
- **Final application:** May 22

Office Hours: Every Tuesday is Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies

The Early Childhood Team provides a Weekly Webinar for lead agencies which sets aside time each week to collaborate with colleagues, learn new ideas/Department updates, and answer questions for lead agencies. These sessions are held on most **Tuesdays at 3:00 p.m.** and usually last a half-hour. Contact amanda.colon@la.gov to request an invitation or if you have questions.

Upcoming Schedule for Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies

- May 12 at 3:00 p.m. LA 4 Enrollment discussion and updates
- May 19 at 3:00 p.m. General current events and updates

Recent Lead Agency Resources

- Spring 2020 Collaboratives Webinar
- Engagement and Outreach Strategies

- April 28 Office Hour webinar slides
- May 5 Office Hours webinar slides

Other

Academic Approval for Type III Early Learning Centers - DUE NOW

Academic Approval is required to receive or maintain a Type III child care license. 2019-2020 Academic Approval expires on June 30, 2020. In an effort to assist sites in starting the 2020-2021 school year in the best possible position, the Department wants to help expedite the Academic Assurance renewal process.

The [2020-2021 Academic Approval Assurances](#) were due by May 1 to ensure that a site's Academic Approval does not expire, and sites will receive a new certificate in advance of July 1. If sites were unable to submit by May 1, the Department will work with these sites to assist in this process.

These [assurances](#) should be signed and submitted electronically.

Email questions to ECAssurances@la.gov.

Early Childhood in the News

[Department Distributes Nearly \\$260 million in Federal Relief Funding to School Systems](#) (Louisiana Believes)

[Love and Structure Will Carry Us Through](#) (The New York Times)

[Supporting Kids During the Coronavirus Crisis](#) (Child Mind Institute)

[Louisiana Extends Child Care Assistance for Critical Personnel](#) (Louisiana Believes)



Contact

For questions regarding COVID-19, school closures, or other concerns, please contact LDOECOVID19@la.gov

For questions regarding licensing, or child health and safety, please contact ldelicensing@la.gov.

For questions regarding lead agencies, please contact leadagencysupport@la.gov.

For all other questions regarding early childhood, please contact earlychildhood@la.gov.

