



NEWSLETTER

News for Early Childhood Educators

June 16, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As a Louisiana native, I'm humbled to be your new State Superintendent. I'm thankful for the work led by John White during his nine years in this office. I hope my tenure will be equally productive. I've wanted to be a school leader since first grade, so I'm very excited – and that's an understatement. I appreciate BESE appointing me to this role, the Senate unanimously confirming me, and the thousands of stakeholders I've worked with throughout my career. I'm not Superman, but I'll work super hard.

The task ahead is monumental – not just for me, but for all of us. While Louisiana has made significant progress by unifying the early childhood landscape, increasing coordination across programs, and promoting the importance of early childhood quality, the state has not reached its ambitious vision of all children ready for kindergarten. Thousands of economically disadvantaged children and families are still unable to access care and education, and often the seats available at the youngest ages are not at the quality needed to prepare children for kindergarten. Our children deserve an outstanding education no matter what. Quality care and education is life-transforming. It impacts families and communities. Despite the many challenges we're facing in America, now is not the time to retreat on child outcomes and opportunities. We must all do our part to help children learn, thrive, and grow – that means me and you.

We're full speed ahead to ensure a Strong Start to the school year. Our kids deserve nothing less. In addition to [Strong Start resources currently available on our website](#), early childhood lead agencies submitted [applications](#) for COVID-19 Community Child Care Recovery Grants to support the recovery of the child care sector in their communities. This funding can be used for a variety of activities to support child care, such as workforce incentive bonuses, sub-grants to child care providers, PPE and/or supplies for child care centers, and other community-level supports focused on recovery.

Other than a global health pandemic, our nation is also hurting and grappling with issues of social injustice. This is not a new concern, but it does deserve a renewed commitment of action. An effective birth through 12 educational system doesn't simply sustain our democracy; instead, it improves it. And now, clearly, is a time where democracy must be improved. I've always strived to work with an equity agenda, pushing additional resources and attention to children, families, and communities that needed it most. I've gathered feedback from multiple perspectives and have always built diverse, inclusive

teams. Regardless of beliefs, identity, address, skin color, citizenship, ability, gender, or income, all students can achieve high expectations – and we should set those.

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Upcoming Deadlines

- [*Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care Providers Survey*](#)-June 22
- [*Lead Agency expenditures*](#)- June 30
- [*Lead Agency reimbursement claims due in eGMS*](#)- July 15

Upcoming Events

- [*New Lead Agency Onboarding Webinar*](#)- July 8

More Important Dates

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

COVID-19 Updates

Office of Public Health Guidelines for Centers

The Office of Public Health and the Louisiana Department of Education have developed required and suggested [guidelines](#) for child care centers to use as they reopen, informed by the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control. Throughout these phases, restrictions will be gradually relaxed. Louisiana moved to Phase 2 of the White House’s reopening strategy on June 5. In order to ensure the health and safety of children and staff, centers must continue to follow the required guidelines detailed in the [Office of Public Health Guidelines for Child Care](#).

Phase 2 Child-to-Staff Ratios and Maximum Group Sizes

Now that Louisiana is in Phase 2, the Department wants to ensure providers of early learning centers are aware of the child/staff ratios and maximum group sizes. Please reference the [maximum group sizes and ratios](#) permissible for Type I, II, and III centers.

Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care Providers Survey

The [Louisiana Policy Institute for Children](#) is conducting a [third survey](#) to learn how the COVID-19 outbreak is continuing to impact child care providers in Louisiana. The survey is being conducted in partnership with the Louisiana Association of United Ways, United Way of Southeast Louisiana, and [resource and referral agencies](#) across the state.

Participation in the survey will help with understanding what is happening with child care in Louisiana throughout the outbreak and recent reopening of the state. Findings from the [earlier surveys](#) were instrumental in informing recovery efforts and making the case for more help for the sector. All providers are encouraged to complete this [survey](#), answering as many questions as possible, even if they did not participate in the earlier surveys.

Providers may complete the third survey online here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VBPF37N>
Responses are requested by **June 22**. For any questions, please contact info@policyinstitutela.org.

Updates for Teaching and Learning

New: Teachstone Webinar: Supporting Teachers and Young Learners as They Return to Classrooms

Teachstone, the creator of the CLASS® tool, is hosting a free webinar for Louisiana's early childhood audience to support the social and emotional development of our youngest learners. Grounded in research and using the foundations of CLASS®, this [webinar](#) will explore how to support children's social-emotional development and learning as they transition back to classrooms. Additional professional development opportunities can be found within Teachstone's new trauma-informed CLASS® professional development series, [Interactions at the Heart of Healing](#).

Webinar Title: Supporting Teachers and Young Learners as They Return to Classrooms

Date and Time: June 25 at 1:00 p.m.

Webinar Link: <https://tinyurl.com/yc8lhg4z>

Interact NOW Teacher Summit

The Interact Now: Teacher Summit is a virtual summit to support early childhood teachers on the most critical aspect of teaching--the ways we support children socially and emotionally.

Sessions will address:

- Maintaining high-quality interactions in all learning environments
- Creating a trauma-responsive classroom
- Educational equity
- Improving Instructional Support, at home or in the classroom
- Engaging with families and modeling interactions
- Preventing and addressing challenging behavior
- CLASS strategies for teaching
- And more!

Learn more at www.Teachstone.com/teachersummit.

Noggin Cares Partnership

The Department has partnered 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 it provides special content to help young children cope during this time.

Extension: Those who [sign up](#) *before* June 30 will receive a 90-day extension, meaning families will get a free 180 day subscription. Those who sign up July 1 - August 31 will get 90 days free from the date they register. Users will not have to *do* anything to receive this extension.

GOLD® OSEP Federally Mandated Year-End Report

OSEP Administrators can generate the [OSEP Federally Mandated Year-End Report](#) at the child and program level for any children who have been exited and meet the requirements for reporting. Administrators should be in the process of exiting all pending OSEP exit requests. Once complete, it is recommended that all Administrators run a year-end report for their records. **LDOE will begin running reports on June 29.**

Questions regarding *GOLD® OSEP* can be directed to brittany.braun@la.gov.

Updates for Funding and Enrollment

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 April were issued on June 2. May payments 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

Fiscal End of Year

Due to the state's fiscal end of year financial processes and the July 4 holiday, there will be a delay in payments for Child Care Assistance (CCAP) for the week ending June 26. Providers should receive payment for this week no later than July 10.

CCAP Pandemic Protective Services Crisis Application

Effective May 31, CCAP no longer processes Pandemic Protective Services Crisis applications for essential critical infrastructure workers. Essential workers were contacted by phone and mailed notices to apply for regular CCAP subsidies by June 30 to determine eligibility for continued child care services. The application can still be [viewed](#).

For questions regarding CCAP, please contact LDECCAP@la.gov.

Updates for Licensed Centers

Supervision

Since Phase 2 has been in effect, LDOE has seen an increase in incidents where children are being left alone and unsupervised on the playground of early learning centers. In an effort to reduce the number of children being left unsupervised, it is recommended that staff conduct head counts at the following times:

- leaving the classroom
- arriving at the playground
- leaving the playground
- arriving to the classroom

While on the playground, staff should actively supervise children by zoning the playground and walking around to observe children.

All incidents involving children being left alone and unsupervised must be reported immediately to the parent, within 24 hours to DCFS Child Welfare, and the Department on the [critical incident form](#). If one is ever in doubt, please report the incident to the Division of Licensing.

Please contact a Licensing Consultant at 225-342-9905 or submit an email to LDElicensing@la.gov.

State Emergency Preparedness - CCDF Annual Notice - Level 1

COVID-19 will inevitably change the way all families and businesses in Louisiana prepare for regional disasters. FEMA and GOHSEP have committed to providing more resources for families and businesses to prepare during these extraordinary times.

The Department would like to remind centers to be prepared for hurricanes and other regional disasters during this time and access your current plans for necessary changes due to COVID-19. If an emergency covers a large area such as a parish or region of the state, the Department will closely monitor conditions out of concern for your safety and for the safety of the children and families you serve.

Please know that should the Department determine your center to be included in a parish or region affected by a disaster, your license/certification may be suspended until you obtain post disaster approval and submit the required [Re-Opening Form](#) to the Department.

For more information about emergency preparedness and the CCDF Annual Notice-Level 1, please visit the Department's [Emergency Preparedness page](#).

Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC) Updates

Please refer to the updated list of [fingerprint locations](#), last revised June 16 and call ahead before sending applicants to be fingerprinted. The LDOE \$15.00 administrative fee, out of state fee, and the DCFS fee have been waived for the CCCBC application until June 30th. Fingerprint fees must still be paid prior to being fingerprinted. The waiver for fingerprint documentation expired April 30.

Please contact LDECCBCprocessing@la.gov with any CCCBC questions.

Updates for Directors

New Directors, or new to Type III?

Know a new director or a director who is new to Type III?

This webinar is designed to help new directors navigate the many benefits of being a Type III center.

Webinar title: New Director Webinar

Date and time: July 10 at 12 p.m.

Webinar link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/95604650863>

Meeting ID: 956 0465 0863

Updates for Lead Agencies

New Ready Start Networks

[BESE approved](#) 13 new [Ready Start Networks](#) this week, bringing the state total to 26. These networks will lead in improvements in early childhood at the local level by creating and updating a blueprint that drives strategy, broadening their community-wide coalitions, establishing local governance, and instituting fundraising strategies to address gaps. Congratulations to the following parishes on joining Cohort 3 of Ready Start Networks: Allen, Assumption, Caddo, Caldwell, Lincoln, Sabine, St. Charles, St. Landry, St. Martin, Tangipahoa, Vermilion, Webster, and West Baton Rouge.

New Lead Agency Onboarding Webinar

The Department is excited to support individuals who are new to the role of community network lead agency. On July 8 at 2 p.m., the Early Childhood Team will host an onboarding webinar to provide guidance and resources about the lead agency's role and responsibilities. This event is open for all lead agencies but specifically designed to support those new to becoming a community network lead agency.

The webinar will focus on

- Community Network Administration
- CLASS® Observations
- Coordinated Enrollment
- Super App and Coordinated Funding
- Classroom Quality
- Additional Resources

New lead agency contacts will receive an email containing a link to attend this webinar. If you are not a new lead agency contact but are interested in attending, or if you have any questions, please contact amy.poirier@la.gov.

Office Hours: Every Tuesday is Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies

The Early Childhood Team provides a Weekly Webinar for lead agency contacts. The purpose is to provide time each week to collaborate with other colleagues, learn new ideas, review Department updates, and answer questions for lead agencies. These sessions are held on most **Tuesdays at 3 p.m.** and usually last a half-hour. Contact amanda.colon@la.gov with questions.

Upcoming Schedule for Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies

- June 23 at 3 p.m. Current events and updates
- June 30 at 3 p.m. Re-enrollment

Important Lead Agency Budget Dates:

- June 30 – All funds must be expended and all goods and services must be received by this date. At this time, funds will not be carried forward into FY 2020-2021.
- July 15– Reimbursement claims for all other state and federal awards ending June 30 are due in eGMS

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

Recent Lead Agency Resources

- Spring 2020 Collaboratives Webinar
- Engagement and Outreach Strategies
- June 2 Office Hours webinar slides
- June 9 Office Hours webinar slides,
- June 16 Office Hours webinar slides

Other

New: Every Child Counts – 2020 Census

By now, every home has received an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. The 2020 Census count impacts the federal funds that communities receive each year for programs and services that are critical for schools, students, and younger children, such as:

- Special education, Head Start, after-school programs, and classroom technology.
- Food assistance, including free and reduced-price school lunches.
- Maternal and child health programs.
- Planning, preparedness, and recovery efforts for national emergencies, including COVID-19.

Self-responses, which can be completed online, by phone, or by mail until October 31, ensures federal funding to support Louisiana students. View the most recent Louisiana 2020 Census Self-Response Weekly Highlights provided by the U.S. Census Bureau Atlanta Region.

The Department encourages school systems to explore the newly available [2020 Census Toolbox](#) to find activities specially designed to be engaging and appropriate for each grade level, from counting for kindergarteners to examining career statistics for high schoolers.

Please contact ldoecommunications@la.gov with questions.

Early Childhood in the News

[Louisiana Launches 13 Additional Pilot Programs to Increase Early Childhood Education Access, Improve Quality](#) (Louisiana Believes)

[Some Louisiana education experts say there must be more access to early childhood development centers for parents to return to work](#) (WAFB)

[With Caution and Creativity, Day Cares Prepare to Reopen](#) (New York Times)

[6 Resources for Talking with Kids about Race](#) (Chicago Parent)

[Louisiana Allocates \\$31 Million in Federal Relief Funding To Ensure Strong Start For Children Birth Through Grade 1](#) (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.

