



EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWSLETTER

August 12, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

The start of the school year is an exciting time and each year, we strive to continue to expand and improve the learning opportunities available for our youngest learners. We believe that every child can learn and every child deserves to enter kindergarten ready. We commend the essential work taking place across Louisiana's communities to unify early childhood systems, implement top-tier curricula, prepare teachers, and improve family enrollment.

At this time, we face another school year during a pandemic. This will be the third consecutive COVID-impacted year for us. We must not let these impediments dissuade our passion and fierce determination. We must do whatever it takes to provide every child with rich learning opportunities. Always remember - we are prepared for this. We persevered before and will do so again – stronger than ever.

Thank you all for your hard work.

Dr. Cade Brumley
State Superintendent of Education

Upcoming Deadlines

- August 19: [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Stabilization Grant Round 1 Application](#) closes

Upcoming Events

- August 17 and 19: [ARPA Stabilization Grant and Teacher Support Grant Benefits Cliff Office Hours](#)
- August 27: [Monthly Office Hours for New Directors](#)
- September 2: [Early Childhood Provider Updates Webinar](#)
- September 13-17: [Teachstone Webinar: Back to School with Meaningful Interactions](#)

More Important Dates

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

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Monthly Mental Health

As health concerns emerge again, please remember that Tulane's [TIKES program](#) offers mental health supports for early learning centers, staff, and families.

Updates for COVID-19

NEW: Upcoming Early Childhood Provider Updates Webinar (September)

The Department will be hosting monthly webinars for early childhood providers. These webinars will include important updates related to COVID-19 and reminders for all provider types.

Providers can access the next provider webinar using the information below:

Webinar Date and Time: September 2 at 1 p.m.

Webinar Link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/93597745872>

Phone Number: 1-312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 935 9774 5872

Passcode: 641464

NEW: Recording for Early Childhood Provider Updates Webinar (August)

On August 5, the Department hosted a webinar for early childhood providers which included important updates related to COVID-19 and reminders for all provider types. [Presentation slides](#) and a [recording of this webinar](#) are available on the [COVID-19 Landing Page](#) on the Louisiana Believes website.

Updates for Teaching and Learning

NEW: 4 Key Concepts to Focus on Instead of Learning Loss

Teachstone, the creators of the CLASS® tool, shared an article titled “4 Key Concepts to Focus on Instead of Learning Loss.” Learning loss has been a major concern of educators and education leaders due to the unpredictable academic year caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This article gives suggestions for how teachers, leaders, and families should think about learning loss and how to ensure that every child and every educator gets the support they need to thrive in the coming year.

4 Key Take-aways and Concepts to Focus on Instead of Learning Loss:

1. Interactions are essential for academic success.

2. CLASS®- measured interactions are important foundations for literacy learning.
3. To help students, leaders must meet teachers where they are.
4. Support children through Instructional Support.

Read the full article, "[4 Key Concepts to Focus on Instead of Learning Loss,](#)" or watch the recorded webinar "[Overcoming Learning Loss with Effective Interactions](#)" to see how stronger systems can support every child and every educator to succeed.

NEW: Early Childhood Investigations Webinars

Early childhood leaders and educators can access the following free, fall webinars:

- [Engineering With Nature: Learning and Communicating through Construction Play](#), August 25 at 1 p.m.
- [Screening to Identify Preschool Children's Strengths and Challenges Using a Cultural Wealth Framework](#), August 26 at 1 p.m.
- [Turn Challenging Behavior Into Prosocial Learning : A New Year Brings New Opportunities](#), September 8 at 1 p.m.
- [New Options for Health Care for Early Childhood Professionals](#), September 9 at 1 p.m.
- [Play and Assessment? YES! Reciprocal Partners in the Early Childhood Classroom Dance](#), September 15 at 1 p.m.
- [Coaching and Supervising Staff for Social Emotional Development Growth: Prioritizing SEL in Your Program](#), September 17 at 1 p.m.
- [Pushing Past Bias and Challenging Classroom Behaviors: Changing Children's Behavior Starts With Changing Ourselves](#), September 22 at 1 p.m.

Reminder: Teachstone CLASS® Back to School with Meaningful Interactions

Teachstone is hosting a free, week-long virtual series focused on what matters the most — meaningful classroom interactions. The webinar series, [Back to School with Meaningful Interactions](#), will be held September 13-17 from 1-1:45 p.m.

Designed with educators in mind, this series is an opportunity to prepare for the school year with brief, daily sessions that highlight strategies teachers can use immediately to build stronger, more equitable relationships with children and their families.

Applicable for teachers of infants, toddlers, or pre-K students, these sessions, also available in Spanish, will offer practical strategies to strengthen the key teacher-child interactions proven to impact child learning and development. [Registration is open](#), so interested participants should save their seat as soon as possible.

Reminder: FREE Upcoming GOLD® Webinars

In Louisiana's publicly-funded early childhood classrooms, GOLD® by Teaching Strategies is used to measure each child's growth and development for multiple purposes. The Department supports programs and educators in using assessments to strengthen the learning and development of young children.

Teaching Strategies offers a variety of [free webinars](#) to provide professional learning opportunities to support early childhood leaders and educators in navigating their system.

- [GOLD® Getting Started Support for Teachers](#)
- [GOLD® Getting Started Support for Administrators](#)

Any questions can be directed to ECAssessment@la.gov.

Updates for Funding and Enrollment

NEW: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Stabilization Grant

On August 5, the Department released the [ARPA Stabilization Grant Round 1 application](#) to all qualified child care providers (including Type I, II & III licensed child care centers, as well as CCAP-certified in-home and family child care providers). The deadline to submit this [application](#) is August 19.

To qualify for the ARPA Stabilization Grants and ensure adherence to Federal requirements of the ARP Act, child care providers must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Provider meets CCDF requirements, including health and safety
2. Provider is licensed or CCAP-certified
3. Provider is open and providing child care services

The Department created a [worksheet](#) to help providers gather the necessary information for the grant application. The worksheet also includes a link to the [estimation calculator](#) that will allow child care providers to approximate the amount of their ARPA Stabilization Grant award.

Type I, II, and III child care centers and CCAP-certified family child care and in-home providers can ask questions about the ARPA Stabilization Grant application or formula during upcoming [Office Hours](#). Office hours will be held on the following days at the following times:

- August 17 from 12-1 p.m.
- August 19 from 12-1 p.m.

The fall ARPA Stabilization Grant funds will be released on the following schedule:

- Week of September 13: released in Regions 1 (Orleans), 4 (Thibodeaux), and 8 (Shreveport)
- Week of September 20: released in Regions 2 (Baton Rouge), 5 (Lafayette), and 9 (Monroe)
- Week of September 27: released in Regions 3 (Covington), 6 (Lake Charles), and 7 (Alexandria)

Any questions can be directed to the Provider Help Desk at 225-250-7635 or 225-252-9543 or via the [Provider Ticket System](#).

NEW: Teacher Support Grant Benefits Cliff Information

Because making sure that teachers are well-compensated is a critical strategy to improve teacher retention and program quality, in July the Department issued a Teacher Support Grant application to Type III child care providers. These grant funds will be available to providers by August 20. All teachers

and support staff still in employment at the center should receive a stipend, bonus, and/or wage supplement from this grant.

The purpose of these grants is to help teachers, but there may be some unintended consequences depending on how providers choose to pay out these grants:

- A “benefits cliff” happens when household earnings increase just enough to result in an abrupt reduction or loss of critical social service benefits. This is very disruptive for families because earnings usually have not increased enough for self-sufficiency without the benefits. If a wage increase is insufficient to cover the loss of needed public benefits, child care staff members may be made worse off by an increase to their wages.

Sites can take several steps to ensure that efforts to improve staff wages have the greatest possible impact on their employees’ well-being. To learn more about the benefits cliff and suggested strategies that do not have unintended negative consequences as these Teacher Support Grants are issued, please join the Department for [Office Hours](#) on the following days at the following times:

- August 17 from 12-1 p.m.
- August 19 from 12-1 p.m.

For more information contact Karen.Powell@la.gov.

Reminder: Survey for LaCAP Grant Recipients

The Department is conducting a survey related to Louisiana Child Care Assistance Provider (LaCAP) Relief Grants. The LDOE has partnered with Postlethwaite and Netterville (P&N) to collect information regarding the use of LaCAP grant funds, to report to the Office of Child Care, legislators, BESE, and other stakeholders. The LDOE will also use this information to direct future technical assistance. Within the coming month, recipients of the LaCAP grants will receive a unique link to complete the online survey. Prior to the unique link being sent, recipients will receive a separate communication with information about the survey opening date.

All recipients of the LaCAP grants will be required to participate in the survey. Failure to complete the survey may impact the provider’s future relief grant funding opportunities, and the provider will be automatically chosen for an audit of the LaCAP grants.

Questions regarding this communication can be directed to the Provider Help Desk at 225-252-9543 or 225-250-7635 or via email to providercertification@la.gov.

Reminder: Louisiana Child Care Assistance Provider (LaCAP) Relief Grant Audit

The Department has contracted with Postlethwaite and Netterville (P&N) to conduct random audits of LaCAP grants. As indicated in the assurance statements in the LaCAP grant applications, records of expenses must be available for the LDOE and/or authorized personnel. Contact will be made by the LDOE and P&N for the providers selected to be audited.

For additional information, please contact the Provider Help Desk at 225-250-7635 or 225-252-9543 or via the [Provider Ticket System](#).

NEW: Pre-K Program Quality Grant for LA 4 or NSECD Classrooms in Child Care Settings - Coming Soon

The Department is exploring a pre-K quality grant per LA 4 or NSECD seat offered in a Type III child care setting to ensure that child care providers are able to offer a full-day of high-quality pre-K while supporting the recovery of child care providers from the financial impacts of COVID-19. This funding will supplement the BESE-approved \$4,580 funding amount per child for LA 4 or NSECD and is expected to be released later this fall.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provides Louisiana with an opportunity to stabilize and strengthen its child care system, and these funds must be used specifically to support child care. As a result, only Type III centers offering LA 4 and NSECD will be eligible for this grant opportunity. All Type III early learning centers that receive this grant will be required to sign assurances guaranteeing that a full day of care, not just the 6-hour instructional day aligned with LA 4 and NSECD requirements, will be provided.

This grant is anticipated to be an additional \$1,000 per child currently served by LA 4 or NSECD in a child care setting as measured by attendance for August, submitted to the Department no later than September 10.

For questions regarding LA 4 and NSECD, please contact the new Pre-K Portfolio Manager, Kishia Grayson at kishia.grayson@la.gov.

Updates for Licensed Centers, Family Child Care, and In-Home Providers

NEW: Updated First Aid and CPR Requirements for Centers

Per Federal requirements, **effective September 30, 2021**, all early learning staff on the premises of a center and accessible to children shall have current certification in CPR and Pediatric First Aid (PFA).

CPR and PFA training can be completed online during the pandemic but must include a visual demonstration by the instructor, as well as a return demonstration to be observed by the instructor, that is observable via Skype, Zoom, or another live platform.

The Department has created a list of [Approved CPR and Pediatric First Aid courses](#). [Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#) have training calendars inclusive of the group training opportunities that are available.

Please contact a Licensing Consultant at ldlelicensing@la.gov or 225-342-9905 with additional questions.

NEW: Motor Vehicle Passenger Checks

As temperatures rise outside, it is imperative that vehicles are adequately inspected for children before staff exit the vehicle. A staff person should physically walk through the vehicle and inspect all seat surfaces, under all seats, and all enclosed spaces and recesses of the vehicle interior. The staff member should record the time of the visual passenger check and sign the log indicating that no child was left in the vehicle.

As with the behavior management policy, please ensure staff have received proper training and repeated training if needed.

Questions can be directed to your Licensing Consultant at 225-342-9905 or ldelicensing@la.gov.

Reminder: Supervision

As child care providers know, quality care is essential to keeping children safe and ready to learn, and quality care begins with good supervision. Supervision should include strategies that promote care to create a safe environment for children. The LDOE continues to receive serious incident reports where children are being left alone and therefore unsupervised.

In an effort to reduce the number of children being left unsupervised, below are some tips:

- Know the number and names of children present
- Have clear and simple rules for children
- Identify children before and after transitioning
- Conduct name-to-face counts on a regular basis and as needed throughout the day
- Be able to see and hear children at all times, including children using the restroom

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

Questions can be directed to your licensing consultant at 225-342-9905 or ldelicensing@la.gov.

Updates for Directors

NEW: Employee Retention Tax Credit

Enacted March 12, 2021, the new COVID-19 economic recovery law, the American Rescue Plan Act, extends the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program through December 31, 2021. The Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) passed in December 2020 offered a more generous tax credit and eliminated a previous restriction for those with a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan.

The ERTC is a refundable, advanceable tax credit of up to \$7,000 per employee, per quarter. Employers can claim the ERTC by withholding payroll taxes for the amount of qualified employee wages. Because the tax credit is refundable, if withholdings do not cover the entire tax credit, the IRS will send a check for the remaining amount.

Employers with 500 or fewer employees who have experienced a 20% or more decline of gross receipts in a quarter compared to the same quarter in 2019 OR subjected to mandatory partial or full shutdown are eligible for this tax credit.

Visit the [National Foundation of Independent Business](#) website for more information.

NEW: Tax Consultation

The LDOE has contracted with [JW Royston, E.A. and Associates, Inc.](#) to provide up to two hours of tax consultation to a limited number of Type III providers to better understand each provider’s current tax situations and needs. All Type III (for-profit and nonprofit) early learning centers are eligible to participate in this opportunity.

Consultation will begin September 1, 2021 and will be available until June 30, 2022 (or until 370 consultation hours have been expended). Type III providers interested in this consultation can begin the process by completing this [interest form](#). Additional contact with providers will be made by the tax professionals from JW Royston, E.A. and Associates, Inc. prior to September 1, 2021.

For more information on tax consultation, contact Shallan Jones at shallan.jones@la.gov.

NEW: Business Training and Consultation

The LDOE has contracted with [First Children's Finance](#) (FCF) to develop and implement a series of five 90-minute business support sessions for Type III early learning centers. These sessions are designed to further enhance the capacity of early learning center owners and to build and strengthen internal systems of monitoring, evaluation, and compliance. These sessions will be offered at four different times throughout the next 11 months and will begin in September 2021. One-on-one consultations from a member of the FCF National Team will also be conducted following the sessions. These consultation hours will be limited and available to providers on a first come, first served basis. Please stay tuned for more information and for training dates for this service.

For more information on Business Training and Consultation, contact Shallan Jones at shallan.jones@la.gov.

Reminder: Early Childhood Substitute Directory

The Department is launching the Substitute Directory on a monthly basis by [region](#), based on the number of early learning centers within each community. This directory will connect early learning providers with individuals interested in working as a substitute in early learning centers within each [region](#).

CCR&R and Regions	Target Month for Directory Launch
Northwestern State University - Regions 7 & 8	August
Children’s Coalition for Northeast Louisiana - Region 9	September

Volunteers of America - Regions 2 & 3 On Track by 5 Alliance - Region 10 Pointe Coupee Early Childhood Coalition - Region 11	October
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The launch of this pilot involves three key activities in each region:

- Recruiting substitutes who are interested in working in early learning centers
- Re-engaging former teachers who are interested in working in early learning centers as substitutes
- Training child care directors to utilize the Substitute Directory

The Substitute Directory will launch in the [region](#) served by Northwestern State University this month.

For more information, contact Cheryl Russell at ECSubstitutes@la.gov.

Reminder: Monthly Office Hours for New Directors

Every month, the LDOE team will hold a webinar that focuses on a topic related to early childhood quality, while also helping to expand directors' network of peers. Office hours are targeted towards new directors. Come learn about Type III requirements, connect with other directors, and stay up-to-date with upcoming events and deadlines. This month's topic will be an overview of Performance Profiles, Louisiana's performance rating, and information on best practices, including the use of ongoing assessment and high-quality curriculum, teacher credentials, and program investment in high levels of individual attention for children.

Webinar Date and Time: August 27 at 10 a.m.

Webinar Link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/99928176003>

Webinar Phone Number: 1-346-248-7799

Meeting ID: 999 2817 6003

Please contact tella.henderson@la.gov with any questions.

Updates for Lead Agencies

Reminder: Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies

The Early Childhood Team holds Office Hours every Tuesday at 3 p.m. for lead agency contacts. The purpose of the webinars is to provide updates and answer questions for lead agencies.

The following is the upcoming schedule for Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies:

- August 17: Back-to-School webinar providing an overview for the upcoming academic year
- August 18: GOLD Update Webinar
- August 24: General updates
- August 31: General updates
- September 7: General updates

Contact amanda.colon@la.gov with questions.

Resources

TIKES Mental Health Consultation

Tulane offers TIKES Mental Health Consultation via telephone or secure video platform to Louisiana caregivers in need during the COVID-19 crisis. Type I, II, & III child care centers, parents, respite care center caregivers, and others caring for young children can request a consultation by completing a [request form](#).

For more information visit the [TIKES](#) webpage.

Other

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Early Childhood in the News

[Child Advocates: U.S. Congress Ought to Learn from Louisiana Legislature's Actions](#) (The Advocate)

[Covid's Impact on Women Workers Costs U.S. Economy \\$650 Billion](#) (Bloomberg)



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 questions regarding child care criminal background check processing, please contact LDEccbcprocessing@la.gov.

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