



# EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWSLETTER

February 11, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19 has deeply impacted Louisiana's families, schools, and early learning centers. We recognize that the economic recovery of our state is closely tied to having an early childhood system that allows all children to access high-quality early care and education programs. This enables families to access the child care they need to go to work. The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) has made recent changes to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that will allow more families to access child care through state subsidies.

BESE has approved a set of sweeping changes for the program that allows for:

- [Rate increases](#) that reflect a shift to the 75th percentile market rate
- Expansion of [CCAP eligibility](#) to include families up to 65% of State Median Income
- A change to reimbursement policy that will allow the state to reimburse at the state maximum rate, regardless of the amount a center charges

Changes in eligibility will increase the number of families able to receive Child Care Assistance while rate increases will provide more options to high quality care and education programs that families can afford. If you need additional information regarding these changes or would like more information on [how your center can benefit from receiving CCAP](#), contact [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov).

Dr. Cade Brumley  
State Superintendent of Education

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## Upcoming Deadlines

- February 12 - 2021–2022 deadline for school systems to submit Super App
- February 12 - Deadline to submit [survey](#) for federal stimulus dollar spending feedback
- February 12 - Deadline to submit [survey](#) on Louisiana Early Learning and Development Standards
- February 12 - Last day to [apply](#) to participate on the Louisiana Early Learning and Development Standards Review Committee
- February 28- *TeachingStrategies GOLD* checkpoint due
- February 28 - Deadline to submit February Child Count
- March 31- Deadline to submit an Intent to Apply for Ready Start Network Cohort 4
- April 7 - Ready Start Network Cohort 4 initial [applications](#) due

## Upcoming Events

- February 22–26 - [Early Ed Week 2021](#)
- February 24 - [Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council](#) meeting
- February 24 - [TIKES Wellness Wednesdays](#) begin
- February 26 - Monthly [Office Hours for Directors](#) begin
- May 25–27 - 2021 Teacher Leader Summit

## More Important Dates

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

## Monthly Mental Health

### Self-Care Tip for Providers

Emphasize your purpose- remind yourself of your purpose as a teacher or director and why you joined the early childhood profession.

### Reminder: TIKES Wellness Wednesdays

Taking care of young children is important work and it can be stressful-especially during a global health crisis! Join TIKES mental health consultants for TIKES Wellness Wednesdays beginning February 24. The sessions will be every Wednesday through March via Zoom. Each week the consultant will lead participants through various stress reduction and self-care topics tailored for early childhood educators.

**Webinar Date and Time:** Wednesdays at 12 p.m., February 24–March 31

**Webinar Link:** <https://tulanehipaa.zoom.us/j/99180170548>

**Webinar Phone Number:** 312-626-6799

**Meeting ID#:** 99180170548

Please contact [michelle.demeulenaere@la.gov](mailto:michelle.demeulenaere@la.gov) with any questions.

## Updates for COVID-19

### NEW: Federal Stimulus Dollars

Louisiana will receive \$198 million to support child care as the field begins to recover from the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Department’s plan includes soliciting data from the field and providing direct supports:

- The LDOE has developed a [survey](#) for providers to offer their feedback and input on how the funding should be spent
- The Federal Consolidations Appropriations Act (CAA) stipulates that states must use this funding to support all child care provider types (including Type I and Type II centers) so we are working with the Governor's Office to allow for this
- The Department's preliminary plan is to use the large majority of the grant award to fund direct financial supports for child care providers

Please stay tuned to the [Early Childhood Connection Newsletter](#) for more information.

### **NEW: COVID-19 Vaccine Updates**

The LDH has provided a variety of information regarding the COVID-19 Vaccine. Currently, the state is distributing vaccines to [Phase 1B Tier 1](#) individuals. Early childhood centers and school employees are included in [Phase 1B Tier 2](#) of the state's vaccine rollout.

[COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine - What You Need to Know](#)

### **Reminder: Webinar for Early Childhood Providers**

On February 4, the Department hosted a [webinar](#) for early childhood providers which included important updates relating 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. During the presentation, providers were asked to complete a [survey](#) regarding federal stimulus dollars for early childhood. Providers are encouraged to fill out the [survey](#), if not already completed.

## **Updates for Teaching and Learning**

### **NEW: Believe to Achieve: Educational Priorities**

The Department recently released [Believe to Achieve: Educational Priorities](#). This priorities plan serves as the Department's roadmap to improving outcomes for all Louisiana children. *Believe to Achieve* includes the Department's new belief statements, state data to help track progress toward Louisiana's six critical goals, and the new priorities that will direct the LDOE's efforts as they work toward achieving the critical goals. Each priority outlines focus areas with key actions and initiatives. The Department believes the following priorities matter most to moving Louisiana's children forward:

- Ensure every student is on track to a professional career, college degree or service
- Remove barriers and create equitable, inclusive learning experiences for all children
- Provide the highest quality teaching and learning environment
- Develop and retain a diverse, highly-effective educator workforce
- Cultivate high-impact systems, structures and partnerships

### **NEW: Creating Transformative Family Partnerships**

Creating transformative family-school partnerships is critical right now. True partnerships are reciprocal, built on mutual trust and respect.

During this time of transition between remote, hybrid and in-class learning, schools and centers should reflect on their approach to working with families and think about how to take efforts to the next level by using a framework for family engagement that will:

- support families by offering rich, ongoing opportunities to bond and connect with their children;

- help sites feel more connected to and ready to partner with families; and
- provide insights that inform future instruction.

Download a [FREE eBook from Teaching Strategies](#) to help implement family engagement solutions that truly transform the school-to-home connection.

Any questions can be directed to [meredith.eckard@la.gov](mailto:meredith.eckard@la.gov)

#### **Reminder: Early Learning and Development Standards Review Committee**

The Louisiana Department of Education is inviting stakeholders to join in a review of the state's [Early Learning and Development Standards \(ELDS\)](#). These standards are intended to help early childhood educators and families across Louisiana deepen their understanding of how children grow and develop in order to best prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. The Department has opened an [application](#) to participate in the standards review committee. All interested early childhood educators, leaders, experts, families, and community members are encouraged to apply. The deadline for submissions is February 12, and selected participants will be notified in late February.

Please contact [leslie.doyle@la.gov](mailto:leslie.doyle@la.gov) with questions.

#### **Reminder: Early Learning and Development Standards Survey**

The LDOE is eliciting feedback from early childhood professionals and stakeholders regarding the [Louisiana Early Learning and Development Standards](#), including the useability and the application of these standards. Please complete this [brief survey](#) by **tomorrow, February 12**. Responses from this survey will be used to guide conversations for a review of the current standards.

Contact [leslie.doyle@la.gov](mailto:leslie.doyle@la.gov) with questions or concerns.

#### **Reminder: Teacher Leader Summit 2021 – Seat allocations**

The 2021 Teacher Leader Summit will take place May 25–27 at the Morial Convention Center in New Orleans. Both the Department and the Convention Center are taking measures to promote the health and safety of all participants and, as a result, there is a reduced overall capacity.

Due to social distancing parameters, the Department has allocated a specific allotment of seats to each school system and each early childhood lead agency for the in-person event. Last month, the Department notified early childhood lead agencies of their total number of seats.

- To best assist lead agencies in determining to whom they should distribute their allocated seats, the Department has released a [one-pager](#) outlining which content will be delivered in-person and which content to expect to be delivered virtually.
- Participants who register for the in-person Summit will also have access to Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series, though a separate registration will be required in order to participate. Participants who register for the Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series will only have access to the virtual content. Specific information regarding how to register for the Virtual Series will be released later in the spring via normal communication channels.

Please contact [ldoeevents@la.gov](mailto:ldoeevents@la.gov) with questions.

#### **Reminder: Teacher Leader Summit Registration**

[Registration](#) for the Teacher Leader Summit opened January 8 and will occur in three phases:

- Early bird registration via allocation (January 8 through March 1)
- Regular registration via allocation (March 2 through April 12)
- First-come, first-serve registration for any remaining tickets (opens April 13)

Note: Due to capacity constraints, there will be no onsite registration this year. All registrations must be completed in advance of arriving at the event.

During the registration process, the code sent to school systems and early childhood lead agencies must be entered. Once the code has reached its maximum number of uses, no other registrations will be accepted for that code. Should an educator register for the event and it is later determined the educator is no longer able to attend, a refund should be requested via Eventbrite.

The Department is unable to transfer tickets automatically from one educator to another. The school system or early childhood lead agency will need to reach out to the Department at [ldoeevents@la.gov](mailto:ldoeevents@la.gov) to determine the best next steps for registering the educator who is “taking the place” of the educator who can no longer attend, which may include increasing the number of uses on their particular registration code.

| Description  | 1-Day Ticket | 3-Day Ticket |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Early Bird Registration</b><br>(January 10–March 1) | \$60         | \$118        |
| <b>Regular Registration</b><br>(March 2–April 12)      | \$77         | \$152        |
| <b>First Come, First Served*</b><br>(April 13–May 10)  | \$77         | \$152        |

*\*should any seats remain*

Participants who [register](#) for the in-person Summit will also have access to Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series, though a separate registration will be required in order to participate. Participants who register for the Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series will only have access to the virtual content. General Summit information can be found in the [overview document](#) posted to the Teacher Leader Library.

Note: When registering, the access code must be entered for available tickets to populate. Without entering the access code, no tickets will show as available.

Please contact [ldoeevents@la.gov](mailto:ldoeevents@la.gov) with questions.

## Updates for Funding and Enrollment

### NEW: Changes in CCAP Rates

BESE has approved changes to CCAP that will benefit both families and providers.

- CCAP Rate Increase: CCAP reimbursement rates were increased to a higher level, making rates equal to 75% of providers across Louisiana. [New CCAP rates](#) will be reflected in the payment issued during the week of February 15.
- State Maximum Rates: If a provider's daily rate is lower than the newly increased state maximum rate, providers will now be reimbursed at the higher state rate.
- CCAP Income Eligibility: Income eligibility was increased to approximately 200% of the federal poverty level (\$43,440 for a family of three), allowing families to make more income and still qualify for CCAP. Income eligibility requirements can be found in the [2020 Sliding Fee Scale](#).

For more information regarding the updates noted above or other CCAP queries, please email the Provider Ticket System at <https://provider.supportsystem.com> or call the Provider Help Desk at 225-250-7635.

#### **NEW: CCAP Provider Payments**

CCAP has extended child care payments to providers based on *enrollment* through December 31.

#### **NEW: CCAP Attendance**

While CCAP has extended payments based on *enrollment* until December 31, providers are still required to use either the Tracking of Time Services (TOTS) Point of Service (POS) device or Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to track attendance. Failure to do so may jeopardize provider payments based on enrollment. If future grants are available, providers failing to use TOTS or IVR will not be considered for the grants.

For assistance with TOTS, please email [Jackie.Droddy2@la.gov](mailto:Jackie.Droddy2@la.gov) or contact Conduent at 1-888-281-0326.

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

#### **NEW: Behavior Management**

The Division of Licensing continues to note an increase in the number of critical incidents reported related to inappropriate discipline of children in care. Again, providers are encouraged to share the information below with staff through a staff meeting and reinforce the following prohibited methods of inappropriate discipline (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Physical or corporal punishment which includes, but is not limited to, yelling, slapping, spanking, yanking, shaking, pinching, exposure to extreme temperatures, putting anything in the mouth of a child, requiring a child to exercise, or placing a child in an uncomfortable position or other measures producing physical pain
- Verbal abuse which includes, but is not limited to, using offensive or profane language, telling a child to "shut up", or making derogatory remarks about children or family members of children in the presence of children
- Discipline administered by another child
- Bullying by another child
- Deprivation of food or beverages
- Restraint by devices such as high chairs or feeding tables for disciplinary purposes
- Withholding active play time for disciplinary purposes, except timeout may be used during active play time for an infraction incurred during the playtime

- Inappropriate use of time out such as using time out with children under age two or administering inappropriate length of time out (each time out shall not exceed one minute per year of age)
- The threat of a prohibited action even if there is no intent to follow through with the threat

If support is needed in this area, training for providers and staff is offered by the local [CCR&R](#) or [Tulane Mental Health Consultant](#).

**NEW: Staff-in-Charge**

In the event a center reports a director or designee has been quarantined, please ensure a staff-in-charge is appointed. The staff-in-charge must be knowledgeable of all Bulletin 137 requirements and have authority to respond to emergencies, inspections, parental concerns and have access to required documentation within the center. This should also occur when a director or director designee is away from the center for a temporary absence (less than 11 consecutive days).

Questions can be directed to a [Licensing Consultant](#) at 225-342-9905 or [ldelicensing@la.gov](mailto:ldelicensing@la.gov).

**NEW: Joint Bulletin137/CCCBC Training Sessions**

The Division of Licensing and Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC) sections will host joint Bulletin 137/CCCBC training sessions via Zoom. This training is for directors, director designees, owners and center staff who are new to licensed centers or need a refresher on the licensing regulations and CCCBC requirements.

The first session will be held February 22 from 12 p.m. –2 p.m. and is already filled to capacity. For those registered, the Zoom meeting link and details will be provided the week of the training session.

Attendees must have their first and last name shown on the screen to receive two continuing education hours. The training certificate will be emailed to the email address you provided during registration.

A second session will be scheduled in March. An email invite with the link will be sent to all licensed providers. Training attendees will be required to register using the Eventbrite link.

Questions can be directed to Donica Jones at 225-342-9905 or [ldelicensing@la.gov](mailto:ldelicensing@la.gov).

**NEW: Continuing Education Requirements**

The previous BESE approved waiver for §1721.A.1 of Bulletin 137: Continuing Education Requirements issued in July 2020 will expire February 28. Beginning March 1, the Department will require that center staff of an early learning center obtain a minimum of 12 clock hours of continuing education per the center’s anniversary year. All training shall be conducted by trainers approved by the Department, and conducted either in-person or virtually. Training is required for:

- Staff members who are left alone with children, or who have supervisory or disciplinary authority over children:
  - must obtain a minimum of 12 clock hours of continuing education per the center’s anniversary year.
- Staff members who are neither left alone with children, nor have supervisory or disciplinary authority over children:
  - must obtain a minimum of three clock hours of continuing education in job related topics per the center’s anniversary year.

The three hours of training conducted by a child care health consultant on infectious diseases, health and safety, and/or food service preparation do not count towards continuing education hours. If a center’s license expires in March 2021, generally, the clock hours should be obtained between April 2020 – March 2021 for review.

Copies of each certificate or transcript shall be maintained at the center and available for inspection by the Department upon request.

Questions can be directed to a [Licensing Consultant](#) at 225-342-9905 or [ldelicensing@la.gov](mailto:ldelicensing@la.gov).

### **NEW: Tornado Drills Reminder**

It's that time of year—at least once a month during the months of March, April, May and June, tornado drills must be conducted. Set a reminder now! Make sure that checks are completed at various times throughout the day.

Tornado Drill documentation shall include:

- Date and time of the drill
- Number of both children and staff present
- Number of minutes it took to complete the evacuation
- Any problems during the drill and if so list corrective measures, and
- Signatures of staff present

An example of documentation, [Monthly Tornado Drills Form](#), can be found on the [Louisiana Believes website](#) in the [Licensed Center Library](#).

Questions can be directed to a [Licensing Consultant](#) at 225-342-9905 or [ldelicensing@la.gov](mailto:ldelicensing@la.gov).

## **Updates for Directors**

### **NEW: Monthly Office Hours for Directors**

Every month, the LDOE team will focus on a topic related to early childhood quality, while also helping to expand directors' network of peers. Come learn about Type III requirements, connect with other directors, and stay up-to-date with upcoming events and deadlines. Office hours and topics will be listed in the Early Childhood newsletter each month.

**Webinar and Discussion Topic:** Requirements for Type III providers

**Webinar Date and time:** February 26 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](mailto:tella.henderson@la.gov) with any questions.

### **NEW: Shared Services - Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining Staff**

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought on and highlighted the many EC workforce challenges, specifically challenges related to recruiting, hiring and retaining staff. [The Early Childhood Workforce: Recruiting and Hiring Toolkit](#) is designed to provide support for early learning center directors to recruit, interview, hire, and onboard new staff members.

Each month, the LDOE will share tips, like the one above, that will help save directors time and money. Stay tuned!

Please contact [shallan.jones@la.gov](mailto:shallan.jones@la.gov) with any questions.

## Updates for Lead Agencies

### **NEW: Ready Start Networks**

All community network lead agencies are invited to [apply](#) to become a Ready Start Network in Cohort 4. Applicants need to send a voluntary notice of Intent to Apply by March 31, and initial applications are due at noon on April 7. All notices, applications, and questions can be directed to [amy.poirier@la.gov](mailto:amy.poirier@la.gov).

### **Reminder: Coordinated Enrollment**

Due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19, the Department is providing multiple options for gathering program partner signatures for the 2021-2022 Coordinated Enrollment Plan signature page.

Options for obtaining program partner signatures include:

- Option 1: Send program partners a brief survey that asks the program partner to input their name and responds to a question stating they participated in the planning process for coordinated enrollment. Survey responses should be submitted as a PDF.
- Option 2: Send an email to program partners requesting an email response stating participation in the planning process for coordinated enrollment. Email responses should be in PDF form to upload into the JotForm.

Contact [amanda.colon@la.gov](mailto:amanda.colon@la.gov) with questions.

### **Reminder: Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies**

The Early Childhood Team provides Office Hours every Tuesday for lead agency contacts to provide updates and answer questions for lead agencies.

Upcoming Schedule for Weekly Webinar for Lead Agencies

- February 16 - Cancelled for Mardi Gras Holiday
- February 23 - General Updates
- March 2 - General Updates
- March 9 - General Updates
- March 16 - General Updates

Contact [amanda.colon@la.gov](mailto:amanda.colon@la.gov) with questions.

## Resources

### **Reminder: 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: <https://medicine.tulane.edu/departments/clinical-sciences/psychiatry/research/tikes>.

## Other

**NEW: Early Ed Week 2021**

Early Ed Week is an opportunity to learn more about the critical issues surrounding early care and education that impact children and families in the state of Louisiana, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children cordially invites you to join us virtually for [Early Ed Week 2021](#). For more information, email [info@policyinstitutela.org](mailto:info@policyinstitutela.org).

**Virtual LOUISIANA EARLY ED WEEK 2021** 

| MONDAY<br>FEB. 22  | TUESDAY<br>FEB. 23   | WEDNESDAY<br>FEB. 24   | THURSDAY<br>FEB. 25  | FRIDAY<br>FEB. 26   |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Keynote Address by Jack Shonkoff, M.D., Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University | #LAEarlyEdWeek Social Media Day of Action & Virtual Film Screening | Virtual Child Care Center Tour for Elected Officials & Business Leaders co-hosted with United Ways across Louisiana and Nicholls State University* | Parent Forum on Child Care hosted in partnership with Urban League of Louisiana, Stand for Children Louisiana, Power Coalition, and Parent Leadership Training Institute | Child Care and the Economy Business Breakfast Briefing co-hosted by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, featuring Rob Grunewald, Economist, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*<br><b>LABI</b> |
|  |  | *Invitation only   |  | *Invitation only  |

**New: Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council - Upcoming Meeting, February 24**

The next meeting for the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council will take place on February 24 at 1 p.m. Participants can join the meeting via [Zoom](#). An [overview of the ECCE Advisory Council](#) and [meeting materials](#) are available online. For additional information, please email [leslie.doyle@la.gov](mailto:leslie.doyle@la.gov).

*NOTICE: In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance at this meeting please contact [leslie.doyle@la.gov](mailto:leslie.doyle@la.gov) at least three business days in advance of the meeting describing the assistance that is needed.*

**Reminder: Early Childhood Care and Education Commission**

The [Early Childhood Care and Education Commission](#) met on January 21. [Presentation slides](#) and a [recording](#) of this meeting can be found online. The next meeting for the ECCE Commission will be March 2, 2021. For additional information, please email [leslie.doyle@la.gov](mailto:leslie.doyle@la.gov).

### **Subscribe to Our Monthly Newsletter by Completing this [Form](#)**

The Early Childhood Newsletter is released as a monthly edition! To ensure all subscribers are current, please complete this [form](#) in order to receive our next monthly edition, or send it to stakeholders who can register as new subscribers.

## **Early Childhood in the News**

[More than \\$1 billion earmarked for Louisiana public schools to combat pandemic](#) (The Advocate)

[Program changes enable more working families to afford and qualify for child care assistance](#) (KNOE)

[OPINION: To solve the workforce crisis, America has to invest in child care](#) (The Hechinger Report)

[Need meals while New Orleans public schools are closed? Find locations, times here](#) (The Times-Picayune)



## **Contact**

For questions regarding COVID-19, school closures, or other concerns, please contact

[LDOECOVID19@la.gov](mailto:LDOECOVID19@la.gov)

For questions regarding licensing, or child health and safety, please contact [LDElicensing@la.gov](mailto:LDElicensing@la.gov).

For questions regarding lead agencies, please contact [leadagencyssupport@la.gov](mailto:leadagencyssupport@la.gov).

For all questions regarding child care criminal background check processing, please contact

[LDEccbcprocessing@la.gov](mailto:LDEccbcprocessing@la.gov).

For all other questions regarding early childhood, please contact [earlychildhood@la.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@la.gov).