



EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWSLETTER

March 11, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

One year ago, Governor Edwards made the difficult decision to close all Louisiana school buildings. Cases of COVID-19 were rising and much was uncertain about this new virus. In networks across the state, early childhood teachers, site and community network leaders, support organizations, and stakeholders have worked tirelessly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that families with young children continue to receive the high-quality care, education, and supports they need to ensure children are on track to enter kindergarten ready.

As terrible as this pandemic has been, our drive and ingenuity have led to silver linings. This crisis has brought into focus what we have known all along, our educators, schools, and early childhood centers are essential — not just to the success of children but to a functioning society.

In January, the Louisiana Department of Education released [Believe to Achieve: Educational Priorities](#), which outlines priorities to achieve the state's critical goals for education. One of those critical goals is that all children enter kindergarten ready for success in school. Louisiana has made considerable progress in unifying and strengthening its early childhood system to reach this critical goal. To sustain the progress Louisiana has made as a state, it is imperative that early childhood providers, community networks, and school systems have the tools and resources to prepare all children birth through age five to start the 2021-2022 school year ready.

Based on feedback from the public and stakeholders, the Department is planning to focus on the following pillars to assist early childhood communities and sites in preparing for the next school year:

1. Child care is stabilized immediately, with a focus on providers and the early childhood workforce.
2. Communities increase access to opportunities for high-quality early childhood care and education this year.
3. Teachers are prepared to lead classrooms and provide high-quality interactions for children every day.
4. Families with young children who experienced disruptions in learning this year are given opportunities and support.

It's been an honor to work alongside you during this critical time. Together we will continue to meet the challenges of this pandemic and move Louisiana forward.

Dr. Cade Brumley
State Superintendent of Education

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Upcoming Deadlines

- March 11 - Deadline to submit [LaCAP Relief Grant for CCAP Certified Type III and Family Homes Round 5](#) and [LaCAP Relief Grant for Non-CCAP Certified Providers Round 1](#)
- March 22 - Deadline for non-CCAP Certified Providers applying for the LaCAP Relief Grant to register as a vendor with the [Louisiana Division of Administration](#)
- March 26 - Deadline for providers to complete the [2021 Annual Early Childhood Customer Satisfaction Feedback Survey](#)
- March 31 - Deadline to submit an [Intent to Apply](#) for Ready Start Network Cohort 4
- April 7 - Deadline to submit Ready Start Network Cohort 4 initial [applications](#)
- April 12 - Deadline to register for the 2021 Teacher Leader Summit

Upcoming Events

- March 17 - [ECCE Advisory Council meeting](#)
- March 17 - [Bulletin 137 Provider Training/CCCBC Tutorial](#)
- March 17, 24, & 31 - [TIKES Wellness Wednesdays](#)
- March 23 - [Tax Preparation Webinar](#)
- March 26 - [Monthly Office Hour for New Directors](#)
- April 1 - [Webinar for Early Childhood Providers](#)
- April 13 or 14 - 2021 Spring Collaboratives for Lead Agencies
- May 25–27 - 2021 Teacher Leader Summit
- June 1–11 - 2021 Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series

More Important Dates

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

Monthly Mental Health

Self-Care Tip for Providers

Focus on kindness and gratitude - an act of appreciation of kindness produces positive emotions, stronger social connections, and improved wellbeing.

Updates for COVID-19

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 [additional individuals](#). Early childhood centers and school employees continue to be included in the state's vaccine rollout. Please refer to the following resources for more information:

- [Where Can I Get Vaccinated?](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine - What You Need to Know](#)

For more information, visit the [LDH website](#).

NEW: Upcoming Webinar for Early Childhood Providers

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

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

Webinar Date/Time: Thursday, April 1 at 1 p.m.

Webinar Link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/6456458090>

Phone Number: 1-470-250-9358

Meeting ID: 645 645 8090

NEW: Webinar Recording for Early Childhood Providers

On March 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.

NEW: Louisiana BFH COVID-19 Family Stress & Resilience Survey

The Louisiana Department of Education is partnering with the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health to [survey](#) families of young children to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, weather emergencies and financial hardship that has placed significant stress on people living in Louisiana. The purpose of this survey is to collect data on the challenges Louisiana families with young children are facing, better understand the internal sources of resilience within families, and review the resources and services that families are accessing to determine adequacy in meeting mental health needs. Responses are confidential.

Please share this [survey](#) for distribution to families.

Questions can be directed to Jennifer Le at Jennifer.Le@LA.gov.

Updates for Teaching and Learning

NEW: Teacher Leader Summit (In-person)

Registration for the in-person Teacher Leader Summit is underway. The regular registration window will run from March 2–April 12.

- All access codes will turn off on April 13 preventing further registration.
- The session schedule and app will be released to early bird ticket holders on April 7.
- The session schedule and app will be released to regular ticket holders on April 9.

New this year, upon successful registration, educators have the opportunity to download graphics to share across their social media platforms to celebrate attending the 2021 Teacher Leader Summit. The graphics can be found in the “I’m Going Passes” section of the [Summit Materials](#) page. Be sure to use the #LATeacherLeaders in social posts. More information regarding the in-person Teacher Leader Summit can be found in the [Overview](#).

Please contact LDOEvents@la.gov with questions.

NEW: Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series

To maximize the delivery of content and educator development, The Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series will take place from June 1—11, and sessions will be accessed remotely. The format will be similar to the Virtual Series offered during spring 2020.

- There will be a max overall registration limit of 8,000.
- The Department is not allocating seats. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Paid ticket holders of the Teacher Leader Summit in-person event will receive an access code allowing them to register for and participate in the Virtual Series at no additional cost.
 - Each code will be one-time use and must be used only by the original ticket holder. Codes are not transferable.

Registration for the Teacher Leader Summit: The Virtual Series will open in April. Tickets are inclusive of all days of the event. The session schedule and app for the Virtual Series will be released to early bird ticket holders on May 10 and May 12 for regular registrants.

Please contact LDOEvents@la.gov with questions.

Updates for Funding and Enrollment

NEW: LaCAP Relief Grants

[LaCAP Relief Grant for CCAP Certified Type III and Family Homes Round 5](#) applications are open. This round of LaCAP grants will support Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) providers with costs incurred from the pandemic, as well as centers providing care for infants and toddlers.

- The deadline to apply for the grant is March 11
- Payments are anticipated to begin the week of March 29 with the Supplemental CCAP portion of the grant being issued the week of April 12.

[LaCAP Relief Grant for Non-CCAP Certified Providers Round 1](#) is also open. Type I, II and Registered Family Homes presently not serving CCAP children, but are operational and serving children, by March 11 are invited to apply for this grant.

- The deadline to apply for the grant is March 11.
- Non-CCAP Certified Providers must register as a vendor with the [Louisiana Division of Administration](#) by March 22.
- Payments are anticipated to begin the week of April 19 with the supplemental CCAP portion of the grant being issued the week of May 3.

Additional LaCAP grant opportunities for CCAP Certified Type III and Family Homes, as well as non-CCAP Certified Providers, are anticipated to be released in June, September, and December of 2021.

Questions can be directed to the [Provider Ticket System](#) or the Provider Help Desk at 225-250-7635.

NEW: Additional Grant Opportunities

The Department anticipates making two additional grant opportunities available to licensed Type III centers. More information will be provided this spring regarding the grant amounts and the grant application deadlines.

- Early Childhood Teacher Stipend Grant: Type III centers will be eligible to apply for a grant to provide teacher stipends to supplement teacher pay during the pandemic.
- Accountability Participation Grant: Type III centers that participate in CLASS® observations this year (local and Picard) will be eligible to apply for a grant to offset additional costs and administrative burdens of participating in the accountability system this year.

Questions can be directed to earlychildhood@la.gov.

NEW: Underutilized Authorizations

Effective June 1, CCAP will conduct an underutilization review of children who have not attended child care for the months of March, April, and May 2021. The Tracking of Time Services (TOTS) Point of Service (POS) and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) attendance for March, April, and May will be reviewed as a part of this process. If CCAP children are not attending, the Department will contact families to assess the need for continued child care services. If families are not reached during this period, their CCAP authorizations will be discontinued June 30, 2021, and they will need to reapply for CCAP.

Questions can be directed to the [Provider Ticket System](#) or the Provider Help Desk at 225-250-7635.

Reminder: CCAP Attendance

While CCAP has extended payments based on *enrollment* until December 31, 2021, 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. Providers failing to use TOTS or IVR will not be considered for LaCAP grants.

For assistance with TOTS, please email Jackie.Droddy2@la.gov or contact Conduent at 1-888-281-0326.

Reminder: Changes in CCAP Rates and Family Eligibility

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) has approved changes to CCAP that will benefit both families and providers, inclusive of the following:

- CCAP Rate Increase: CCAP reimbursement rates were increased to a higher level, making rates equal to 75% of providers across Louisiana and higher for infants. [New CCAP rates](#) were implemented beginning 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](#) or call the Provider Help Desk at 225-250-7635.

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

NEW: Provider Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Department is asking all early childhood providers (Type I, II, III, and registered Family Homes) to complete the [2021 Annual Early Childhood Customer Satisfaction Feedback Survey](#). The survey is short, the submissions are anonymous, and the questions provide the opportunity to share feedback that will improve the Department’s processes. Please submit responses by March 26.

Questions can be directed to earlychildhood@la.gov.

NEW: Change in Child-to-Staff Ratio for Type I Centers

In accordance with Bulletin 137, effective July 1, 2021, the minimum child-to-staff ratios for children ages two and under for Type I centers will be the same for Type II and Type III Centers. Please review the chart below advising the changes.

Minimum Child-to-Staff Ratios—Types I Centers (Effective until June 30, 2021)		Minimum Child-to-Staff Ratios—FOR ALL TYPES (Effective July 1, 2021)	
Ages of Children	Ratio	Ages of Children	Ratio
Infants under 1 year	6:1	Infants under 1 year	5:1
1 year	8:1	1 year	7:1
2 years	12:1	2 years	11:1
3 years	13:1	3 years	13:1
4 years	15:1	4 years	15:1
5 years	19:1	5 years	19:1

6 years and up	23:1	6 years and up	23:1
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NEW: Waiver Extension for 16-year-olds

In February 2021, BESE approved a waiver extension for staff age requirements in early childhood provider settings. In an effort to address the needs of educators and children, a person age 16 may be employed and included in child-to-staff ratios if the person works under direct supervision of an adult staff member. This waiver extension expires on December 31, 2021, unless terminated sooner by BESE. Questions can be directed to a [Licensing Consultant](#) at 225-342-9905 or ldelicensing@la.gov.

NEW: First Aid/CPR certification

First Aid/CPR certification is now available through [Child Care Research and Referral Agencies \(CCR&Rs\)](#) at no cost to all directors, director designees, and center staff working in Type III centers and Registered Family Homes. Please refer to your local CCR&R training calendar for course offerings. Space is limited.

Contact michelle.demeulenaere@la.gov with questions.

Reminder: Continuing Education Requirements

The previous BESE approved waiver for §1721.A.1 of Bulletin 137: Continuing Education Requirements issued in July 2020, expired February 28, 2021. Beginning this month, 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. As an example, if a center’s license expires in March 2021, generally the clock hours should be obtained between April 2020 – March 2021. All training shall be conducted by trainers approved by the Department. The training can be conducted either in-person or virtually. Please see [Bulletin 137](#), §1721.A.1 of Bulletin 137 for staff requirements.

Please note, 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.

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

Visit [Continuing Professional Development](#) for options in obtaining annual continuing professional development.

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

Reminder: Joint Bulletin137/CCCBC Training Session

The Division of Licensing and CCCBC sections will host an additional joint Bulletin 137/CCCBC training session on March 17 from 12 p.m. – 2 p.m. This training is for directors, director designees, owners and center staff who are new to licensed centers or who need a refresher on licensing regulations and CCCBC requirements and were not able to attend the session that was held on February 25.

All attendees must register via [Eventbrite](#) to attend the training that will be held via Zoom. 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 provided when registering.

Questions can be directed to Donica Jones at 225-342-9905 or ldelicensing@la.gov.

Reminder: Tornado Drills

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 the required documentation, the [Monthly Tornado Drills Form](#), can be found in the [Licensed Center Library](#).

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

Updates for Directors

NEW: Free Tax Consultation for Type III Providers

[Allday Consulting Group](#) will provide 1:1 consultations with Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) to discuss best practices in recording:

- business losses
- grants received during COVID-19
- small business loans, and
- other pandemic-specific items

Providers at Type III early learning centers can schedule free online one- to two-hour consultations by completing an [interest form](#).

Questions can be directed to emmy.odwyer@la.gov.

NEW: COVID-19 Tax Planning Webinar with [Allday Consulting Group](#)

The Department is hosting a webinar for providers to review changes created by the Consolidated Appropriations Act and address tax Considerations, such as:

- Economic Disaster Loans (EIDL)
- Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC)
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

Webinar date and time: March 23 at 1 p.m.

Webinar link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/91617117654>

Webinar phone number: 1-312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 916 1711 7654

Questions can be directed to emmy.odwyer@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 the CLASS® tool and how it relates to the Performance Profile rating.

Webinar date and time: March 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 with any questions.

NEW: Learn About Shared Services - Business Automation Using Child Care Management Software

Using Child Care Management Software (CCMS) solves several issues at the center and systems levels. In centers, CCMS can support receiving all tuition that is due. Automated systems include ACH payments from families to facilitate predictable income receipt. Families and employees can sign it at a kiosk each day. Child and staff data is organized, enabling reports that help directors see what is missing or expired. There are many CCMS products that can support this work at your center.

These resources from Opportunities Exchange can help to further explain CCMS and how it can change the nature of your business.

- [CCMS: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Child Care Management Software: What You Need to Know](#)

Please contact shallan.jones@la.gov with any questions.

Updates for Lead Agencies

NEW: 2021 Spring Collaboratives

The Early Childhood Team will conduct virtual Spring collaboration meetings for early childhood community network lead agencies mid-April. Child Care Resource and Referral agency representatives are also invited to join. Participants can choose either Tuesday, April 13 or Wednesday, April 14. Session topics will include family engagement, supporting child care recovery, and supporting academic quality.

Dates: April 13 or April 14

No prior registration is required. All community network lead agencies are required to have a representative in attendance at one of these collaboration meetings, and attendance will be recorded at each webinar.

Please contact amanda.colon@la.gov with any questions.

Reminder: 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.

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

- March 16 - Pre-K Workgroup
- March 23 - General Updates
- March 30 - Special Edition Webinar: New Funding Opportunities (a special Zoom link will be sent to lead agencies in advance)
- April 6 - General Updates

Contact amanda.colon@la.gov with questions.

Resources

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., now – 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 with any questions.

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 the [TIKES](#) webpage.

Other

NEW: Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council

The [next meeting](#) for the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council will take place on March 17 at 1 p.m. in the Claiborne Building, located at 1201 N. Third Street in Baton Rouge. An overview of the ECCE Advisory Council and meeting materials are available [online](#).

For additional information, please email leslie.doyle@la.gov.

NOTICE: In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance for the upcoming ECCE Advisory Council meeting, please contact leslie.doyle@la.gov at least three business days in advance of the meeting describing the assistance that is needed.

NEW: Early Childhood Workforce Turnover and Compensation Report

The Louisiana Department of Education has released a [report](#) examining the early childhood workforce, and in particular its rates of teacher turnover, compensation levels, initiatives to increase compensation, and a comparison of the Louisiana workforce with other states. For more information, please view the department's [webinar](#) on turnover and compensation in the workforce or email

Please contact pheriche.perkins@la.gov with any questions.

Reminder: Early Childhood Care and Education Commission

The [Early Childhood Care and Education Commission](#) met on March 2. [Presentation slides](#) and a [recording](#) of this meeting can be found online.

For additional information, please email leslie.doyle@la.gov.

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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

[Outdoor Preschools Grow in Popularity but Most Serve Middle-class White Kids](#) (The Hechinger Report)

[Child Care Relief Funding in House-passed American Rescue Plan: State-by-State Estimates](#) (The Center for Law and Social Policy)

[Tough Test: The Nation's Troubled Early Learning Assessment Landscape](#) (FutureEd)

[Why A Battle is Shaping Up in Louisiana Over the Latest Push for Mandatory Kindergarten](#) (The Advocate)



Contact

For questions regarding COVID-19, school closures, or other concerns, please contact LDOECOV19@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.