



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 18, 2020**

## **Department of Human Services Releases COVID-19 Operational Recommendations for Child Care Providers**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Department of Human Services' (DHS) Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) today released operational recommendations for [child care providers](#) in Pennsylvania in response to COVID-19.

“The Wolf Administration is committed to serving vulnerable populations every day, and that commitment will not waiver in the face of an emergency,” said DHS Secretary Teresa Miller. “We intend to ensure support of child care providers to the greatest extent possible as they work to provide services for those Pennsylvanians who continue to work or experience disruptions in service in this time of crisis.”

OCDEL has developed the following operational guidance, which will be updated and re-released on a recurring basis as new information becomes available. Recommendations for child care providers include:

- Exercise and promote hygienic practices;
- Maintain a communication plan for staff and families;
- Review agency back-up plan and infection control procedures;
- Report all suspected cases of COVID-19 to the Pennsylvania Department of Health and facility closures to OCDEL at [RA-PWOCDELFacilclose@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWOCDELFacilclose@pa.gov);
- Follow state and federally-issued guidance;
- Document any actions that were taken and maintain evidence for why actions were taken; and,
- Stay Informed via the [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Child care facilities were closed statewide on March 16 to support COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Exceptions to this policy are family child care homes and group child care homes operating inside a residence. Closures and operational guidance are communicated directly to child care providers through the child care certification listserv and the Pennsylvania early education listserv. Providers should check for updates in their email daily.

This temporary closure of child care facilities may be a burden for Pennsylvania families who depend on this service. Because it is especially burdensome for essential personnel such as health care workers and first responders who must have safe and stable care options for their children in order to report to work, OCDEL has implemented a waiver process for child care centers and group child care homes that serve these

families. Operators of these facilities who seek a waiver from the commonwealth's temporary closure order should contact OCDEL at [RA-PWDRACERT@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWDRACERT@pa.gov). Waiver requests will be processed as quickly as possible.

OCDEL is also advising communities that in order to meet the needs of school-age children, implementation of part-day school-age programs are a viable option for communities as they consider supporting working families. Currently part-day school-age programs meet the needs of many working families over the summer months. Community-based organizations do not need to apply for licensure to operate a part-day school-age program. Providers considering this option must continue to comply with Pennsylvania Child Protective Services, criminal background clearances.

OCDEL will also temporarily modify Pennsylvania's child care subsidy program, Child Care Works (CCW), in support of challenges child care providers are experiencing. Effective March 13, 2020, CCW program requirements will be modified through April 30, 2020. The modifications will be reevaluated at that time. These emergency CCW program modifications include but are not limited to:

- CCW payment will continue for all children enrolled in CCW based on current service agreements;
- Elimination of CCW enrolled family co-pays for families whose program closes related to COVID-19 impacts; and,
- Absences for children enrolled in CCW will not count toward the child's annual absence count.

Visit the PA Department of Health's dedicated [Coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

DHS program offices are continuing to formulate recommendations for other provider communities and will publish guidance as it becomes available. Guidance to DHS providers related to COVID-19 is available [here](#).