

ANNOUNCEMENT

20 #17



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: 11/20/2020

Effective Date: 11/01/2020

Subject: Child Care Works Payment During the Proclamation of Disaster Emergency

To: All Regulated Child Care Providers; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); and The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Early Learning Resource Center Program Representatives

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PURPOSE

To provide information to child care programs participating in Child Care Works (CCW) through the Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRC). This policy details payments based on current enrollment for child care providers who experience a closure or absences related to the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) while the Proclamation of Disaster Emergency most recently renewed on August 31, 2020 remains in effect. In order to continue supporting child care providers through closures and reopening resulting from COVID-19, OCDEL is updating its previously issued guidance which addressed CCW payments through the end of the Disaster Emergency period.

This updated policy provides additional information and supersedes ELRC Announcement 20 #11. This policy does not apply to providers who are temporarily closed.

BACKGROUND

From Mar.13, 2020 through Aug. 31, 2020, the Department of Human Services (DHS) paid child care providers based on their Mar.13, 2020 CCW enrollments. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) provided this continuity of payment based on the suspension of eligibility determinations for participating families during this

ANNOUNCEMENT

20 #17



time. Effective Sept. 1, 2020, OCDEL communicated CCW enrollments would be updated to reflect families' current enrollment status and pay participating providers based on children's attendance.

OCDEL not only committed to monitoring feedback from stakeholders, but also promised to review the impact through data regarding the return to payment based on attendance. In order to respond to challenges raised by providers, this announcement explains the modifications to CCW payments for participating children and payment to providers who must close for a maximum of 14 days due to COVID-19, as defined in Announcement C-20-6 Revised.

DISCUSSION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, child care providers are encountering complex challenges exceeding the scope of normal operations. DHS recognizes providers have been impacted by mandated closure for significant periods of time or temporary closures due to COVID-19.

Effective Nov. 1, 2020, CCW payments to child care providers will be based on their **current enrollment**, with the exception of the following:

- Providers who have been closed by Certification due to a negative sanction will not be paid.
- Providers who have reported permanent closure will not be paid.
- Providers who temporarily closed more than 14 consecutive business days due to COVID-19 exposure, *please reference **CCW Payments for closure or absences related to COVID-19** guidance below.*

While child care providers will receive payment based on current CCW enrollment, the usual eligibility and attendance policies will continue. Attendance of children must still be tracked and reported on invoices. Child care providers will mark COVID-19 related absences as "CA" (COVID absence) to distinguish it from a non-COVID related absence on a paper invoice or include a note on an online invoice. When an enrollment ends, the provider will no longer be paid for the enrollment if any of the following takes place:

- The child transfers to a new provider;
- The child is no longer eligible for CCW;
- The family voluntarily withdraws from the CCW program;
- The child for whom an adverse action is issued which becomes effective during the 14-day closure;
- A child does not attend more than five consecutive days due to a reason not related to COVID-19, who is suspended from CCW, per standard practice under 55 Pa. Code § 3041.19; and

ANNOUNCEMENT

20 #17



- The provider temporarily closes for more than 14 consecutive business days. (Please reference **CCW Payments for closure or absences related to COVID-19** guidance below).

Child care providers that close for COVID-19 mitigation or to fulfill quarantine recommendations will not collect copayments from families for CCW for the period of the closure, but will receive CCW payments based on the children's enrollment. If a provider is partially shut down, the provider may only collect copayments from CCW families whose children are actually in care.

Child care providers who are eligible will continue to be paid based on their current enrollment for children who remain eligible for CCW through normal invoicing and payment methods.

CCW Payments for closure or absences related to COVID-19

Child care providers must report the positive COVID-19 case to the Department of Health or local health department, depending on the county, and the OCDEL Bureau of Certification as described in [Announcement C-20-12](#). The ELRCs will verify with the OCDEL Bureau of Certification that the closure is due to a positive COVID-19 case. If the child care provider must completely or partially close because of COVID-19 exposure, the provider will be eligible for payment based on their current CCW enrollments on the first full day of closure for all CCW children enrolled during the time period of the closure.

NOTE: In addition to daily screening, all child care providers should have COVID-19 screening procedures in place to assess children before accepting a new enrollment. This could include family health discussion, but should also include whether the child was previously enrolled in a child care that may be temporarily closed due to COVID-19 confirmed or suspected cases.

If an entire child care provider must close due to COVID-19 exposure, CCW payment will be made based on the current enrollments effective the first full day of the closure. This payment will not exceed 14 consecutive business days from the first full day of closure. If a child becomes ineligible for CCW or transfers to a new provider during the closure, the enrollment will end, and the provider will no longer be paid for the child. If the provider does not reopen on the 15th business day, the provider will be considered temporarily closed. At this time, all CCW children who remain enrolled with this provider will be suspended by the ELRCs and CCW payments will cease.

If an early learning classroom must close due to COVID-19 exposure, but the child care provider remains open, CCW payment will be made based on their current

ANNOUNCEMENT

20 #17



enrollments for the children in that classroom, effective the first full day of the closure, for a period not to exceed 14 consecutive business days. If a child becomes ineligible for CCW or transfers to a new provider during the closure, the enrollment will end, and the provider will no longer be paid for the child. If the classroom does not reopen on the 15th business day, the children in the classroom, who remain enrolled with this provider, will be suspended by the ELRCs and the provider will no longer be paid for those children. If the classroom reopens and a child does not return to care by 15th business day, the child will be suspended by the ELRCs on the 15th business day of the closure.

If a child is absent due to COVID-19 exposure, the child will not be suspended by the ELRC until the 15th business day, if the child is absent for more than 14 consecutive days.

If a child is absent due to other reasons, not related to COVID-19, their CCW enrollment will be suspended by the ELRCs if the absence is expected to last more than five consecutive business days, as required by 55 Pa. Code § 3041.19. If the child's enrollment is current, and the absences are intermittent, the provider will continue to be paid based on the child's enrollment status.

Child care providers **may not** collect copayments from families, if the copayment is assigned to a child who is not attending due to a COVID-19 related absence, classroom closure or child care provider closure.

NOTE: If the child attends even one day during the week, the provider may collect the copayment for that week. Only a full week of absence/closure would result in the copayment being waived.

NEXT STEPS

1. Child care programs
 - a. Share with staff completing CCW attendance reporting and invoicing.
 - b. Direct any questions to your ELRC.
2. ELRCs
 - a. Review and share with appropriate staff.
 - b. Direct any question to your program representative.