



March 19, 2020

Dear Governor Parson,

As the nation works to minimize the health impacts from the Coronavirus (COVID-19), we are writing to offer policies that could help mitigate the spread of the virus, address the economic effects that families, educators, and businesses will undoubtedly realize as a result of the public health emergency, and help keep children and families healthy and safe.

During this time of crisis, it is important to ensure families can access critical public health services. The following actions will help achieve this goal:

- Temporarily suspend redetermination of family eligibility for child care services, WIC, SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF to ensure that temporary changes in family workforce participation, earnings, or other factors due to COVID-19 do not impact family eligibility.
- Implement “express lane eligibility” for Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, and other programs, based on information from CCDBG eligibility to support families during this period.

In regard to child care, it is our understanding that there is federal guidance available for situations like these, such as the [2017 IM Flexibility in Spending CCDF Funds in Response to Federal or State Declared Emergency Situations](#). In addition to the options provided in the guidance, we ask that you consider the following policy options:

- Encourage local governments to evaluate whether to close child care facilities in their communities when closing K-12 systems, while ensuring that select providers can flexibly operate in order to serve the children of emergency responders and other essential personnel for whom remote work is not an option. Focus on existing child care sites, which already have the trained staff, facilities, and equipment, as the primary way to provide child care for essential workers. Provide “hazard pay” and the public health training appropriate to the pandemic so early childhood educators can meet the demand of providing services responsive to essential personnel.
- Allow personnel impacted by child care system closures to obtain unemployment compensation.
- Enroll child care programs, both home-based and centers, in mortgage forbearance, provide rent deferrals, and ensure support for utility and insurance payments for a three to six month period.
- Reimburse providers accepting subsidy payments more frequently than one month in arrears.
- Adjust subsidized child care assistance payment policies to increase eligibility, waive co-pays, and pay facilities based on enrollment of children rather than actual attendance. This will help



provide financial security for families and child care facilities during these difficult times. Consider the use of CCDF quality, state dollars or transferred TANF dollars to help providers cover the costs of maintaining their operations safely during this time, including necessary sanitation equipment, supplies and services, substitute caregivers, paid leave for affected staff, copayments for coronavirus tests, grants to cover operational costs in the event of closure and other expenses providers and educators will occur as the result of coronavirus spread. Please note that this is not to suggest that TANF dollars be used at the expense of meeting families' need for cash assistance.

- Ensure that licensing staff are well-trained on best practices for safety and hygiene and can help providers meet public safety requirements.
- Implement a strong outreach and communications plan, utilizing licensing, subsidy, and/or the child care resource and referral systems, to ensure families know about and are aware of their options, with communications provided in all relevant languages.
- Incorporate the perspective of child care providers in advisory groups for emergency management agencies to help inform the state on its response to changing circumstances.

We understand the response should be appropriate for communities grappling with this situation. However, it will be important for state officials to collaborate so that policy and guidance from various state agencies is coordinated, coherent, and clear and provides certainty in these uncertain times.

Early care and education is a critical support to our economy. Not only does it help prepare the next generation for success in life, but it also allows parents to participate in today's workforce and contribute to the economy. We need to help Missouri families, educators, and businesses in weathering this emergency quickly and effectively to combat the Coronavirus and continue moving our state forward with a strong early care and education system that is ready to meet the needs of the workforce.

We stand ready to collaborate with your administration as it considers its response. Please let us know how we can best engage to ensure our child care system remains strong during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Linda Rallo
Aligned

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