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Families and Child Care Programs to Get Relief
Additional Assistance Likely Needed to Ensure Access to Safe and Affordable Care

Governor Parson and Department of Social Services Acting Director Jennifer Tidball unveiled the Show Me Child Care Plan yesterday, which will disburse the $66.5 million in childcare funds granted to the state through the federal CARES Act.

“Over the last 7 weeks, we’ve met with child care providers throughout the state, and whether they are open and serving the children of frontline workers, or closed and preparing to transition back to work, they are in need of relief and support to ensure their businesses remain open to serve families,” said Brian Schmidt, Executive Director of Kids Win Missouri. “We are glad to see the state taking action to ensure federal dollars are distributed to programs to help them weather this storm to ensure access to child care remains as families go back to work.”

The plan includes benefits for low-income families to help in accessing child care and funds that will go directly toward supporting programs.

CARES Act Child Care Plan benefits for low-income families:
- Low-income Missouri families who are unemployed due to COVID-19 can now get a temporary Child Care Subsidy benefit (up to 90 days) while they look for work. This benefit is available through December 2020. Effective May 1 through August 31, parents who work, attend school, or train for work with an income from 138 to 215 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), may now qualify for Transitional Child Care Subsidy, even if they previously did not qualify for Child Care Subsidy.
- Missouri families qualifying for or currently receiving a Transitional Child Care Subsidy benefit will receive an 80 percent subsidy benefit if their income is between 138 to 176 percent of the FPL or a 60 percent subsidy benefit if their income is from 177 to 215 percent of the FPL.

Child care provider CARES Act Child Care Plan benefits:
- Child care providers remaining open to provide services to essential personnel can receive a one-time payment. The payment is based on child care provider’s capacity and range from $1,000 (under 10 children served) to $7,500 (over 200 children served).
- All licensed or licensed-exempt child care providers who operate non-traditional hours, 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Monday through Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, can receive a $100 monthly stipend for each child care slot for the months of April, May, and June.
- Missouri Child Care Subsidy providers will receive payments based on authorized care instead of actual attendance for April, May, and June service months.
- Missouri has allocated $10 million for one-time grants to higher education institutions to establish on-campus child care programs that include slots for Child Care Subsidy families.
Advocates acknowledge, through their work with providers, that adjusting to a new normal and incorporating updated health and safety guidelines from the CDC, state, and local health departments means added costs for programs. These costs include PPE for staff, additional cleaning and sanitation supplies, and increased staffing to accommodate smaller group sizes with stable adults and classrooms. These costs are also likely to go beyond June, when the additional support for programs is scheduled to expire.

“Child care programs operate on razor thin margins, and all of these changes in operations amount to significant costs for programs in a time when they are either serving less children or completely closed. More than half of Missourians lived in a child care desert, pre-COVID 19. The prospect of programs closing would place additional burdens on children and families,” Schmidt said.

It is unknown how many providers will be able to reopen once state and local orders are lifted. With almost half of Missouri child care facilities closed during the month of April, program viability remains a concern.

“Many of our school-based programs around the state are falling through the stabilization cracks. They are normally funded through parent fees and found themselves ineligible for many of the federal funds that were disbursed,” said Terri Foulkes, Director of the Missouri AfterSchool Network. “Some programs we work with are very concerned about their ability to maintain their staff and reopen their programs as parents go back to work.”

While the news from this week brings some relief to providers and advocates, they are continuing to meet to identify what gaps may exist, knowing that ensuring the sustainability of child care programs in the state is a cornerstone in getting the economy back on track.

“In order to get our economy and businesses restarted and running at full steam, we have to ensure we have a childcare infrastructure to support parents getting back to work,” said Linda Rallo, Vice President of Aligned. “Child care is essential. This plan recognizes the importance of childcare to our society---from job hunting to pursuing continued education---and we hope the state is able to swiftly get these funds in the hands of providers.”