
MEMORANDUM

June 17, 2020

To: Governors' Offices
From: National Governors Association
Re: Child Care Reopening and Recovery

Introduction

As states and governors continue working to flatten the curve, plans have been developed and finalized in many states to reopen businesses. In supporting both the child care and early learning workforce and the economy as a whole, child care is reopening for parents to return to work. During the pandemic, some child care centers across the nation remained open for essential workers, operating under specific guidelines for health and safety. As other businesses reopen, states are reopening child care, with guidelines and restrictions, for families in non-essential business.

Emerging State Models in Child Care Reopening and Recovery

1. **Illinois:** The gradual reopening of child care is included in phases 3 and 4 of the governor's [Restore Illinois](#) plan and began May 29, 2020. Group size limits will be roughly 30% lower than their pre-pandemic level for licensed childcare centers and home centers will be able to reopen to full capacity. These efforts encompass 75% of the state's pre-coronavirus child care capacity.
2. **Maryland:** Child care remained open for children of essential workers. The Maryland State Department of Education developed [Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Child Care](#) which expands child care reopening to more families who are going back to work in stage 1 of state reopening. Reopening all child care facilities is included in stage 3 of statewide reopening.
3. **New Mexico:** [The state eased restrictions on who could use child care services](#) effective May 1, 2020. Now, families of non-essential businesses, nonprofit entities, protective services, behavioral health and/or juvenile justice service are eligible to access child care services.
4. **Ohio:** [Child care reopened in phase 2](#) of state reopening on May 31, 2020 with some restrictions including: limiting group sizes and screening staff, children and families. Limited group size includes adult staff in total numbers. Ohio's plan also ensures pay for child care and early learning educators with underlying health conditions if the public school system includes such pay for K-12 teachers.
5. **Louisiana:** A [guide for reopening for early childhood](#) communities and providers was released by the Department of Education, which houses early care and education programming, to outline four priorities: health, safety and operations; sustaining and expanding early childhood access; classroom quality and continuous learning; and family engagement and support. The guide also includes resources for each category as centers and early learning centers reopen and/or expand group size to reopen for children of non-essential workers.

Considerations for Governors and State Early Childhood Leaders

In deciding how to meet child care needs during the COVID-19 reopening and recovery phases, governors' offices should consider the following:

1. **Developing and disseminating state health, safety and sanitation guidelines that align with CDC guidelines.** The CDC’s guidelines include decision making tools and interim guidance on health, safety and sanitation guidelines for child care, schools and youth programs. The [child care reopening decision making tool](#), to assist directors and administrators, outlines the steps child care centers and early learning settings are suggested to follow. Step one ensures that reopening is consistent with state and local orders; if so, the guidance includes promoting healthy hygiene practices; intensifying cleaning, sanitation, disinfection and ventilation; encouraging social distancing; adjusting activities and procedures; and training employees on health and safety protocols.
2. **Supporting families and communities in transitioning back to child care and/or expanding access to children of non-essential workers.** As families transition back to child care and early learning programs and/or adjust to new guidelines, supporting families is vital¹.
 - a. Within health, safety and sanitation guidelines, the [CDC recommends protocols](#) to limit volunteer interaction and social distancing in drop off and pick up routines.
 - b. Governors can support the use of emergency funding to cover family co-payments and tuitions and maintain subsidies as a means of protecting child care slots and preventing permanent closures. Financial assistance should also be based on eligibility rather than actual child attendance.
 - c. Focus child care re-opening and rebuilding efforts on parent needs and preferences and assurances of quality for children. Information about what types of settings and experiences families want for their children in a post-COVID world must drive policymakers’ decisions.
 - d. Meet the immediate needs of parents and other caregivers to support the developmental and emotional needs of young children. Build capacity in communities to provide effective, appropriate support to parents, families and other informal caregivers to ensure that children continue to learn and thrive during this period of disruption.
3. **Allocating Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding and other flexible funding sources to child care and early learning programs.** In disbursing GEER funding to educational programs, states and governors have the flexibility to include child care and early learning programs in the budget. [GEER applications](#) were due June 1, 2020 and allocations and proposed plans must be submitted within 45 days of receipt of funds. Advocates and a number of national legislators are currently requesting additional stimulus funds to ensure programs can re-open and stay open to support the rebuilding of our economy.
4. **Clearly communicating what safe child care looks like and the steps being taken to get there.** Public health and child care leaders must work together to clearly articulate to parents and the public what safe child care looks like and how parents can be sure that returning to care will not put their child in danger. Governors can play an important role in projecting that information to parents and the general public.
5. **Ensuring that child care providers receive support and adequate protection to promote healthy and safe environments for children.** Enable provider access to COVID tests, personal

¹ Some recommendations are drawn from the RAPID-EC research group, which is surveying a representative sample of families of young children on a regular basis throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Information on the survey results can be accessed at <https://www.uorapidresponse.com/reports-policy-briefs>

protective equipment and supplies, paid sick leave, enhanced wages and training on COVID safety practices.

6. **Requiring employers to allow flexibility of work schedules and additional time off for parents facing a lack of adequate child care.** Businesses must play a role in ensuring that employees have flexibility and support so that they can return to work.
7. **Maintaining real-time data and information at the state and community level on available child care options for families and increase efforts to make it easier for families to find and locate childcare.** Families need access to real-time information to make appropriate child care decisions and so that state officials understand the relationship between local child care supply and demand and can make appropriate policy decisions.

Supplemental Resources:

CDC Guidelines for Child Care: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

COVID-19 Response and the President’s Plan for Opening America Up Again:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/php/CDC-Activities-Initiatives-for-COVID-19-Response.pdf>

State Level Guide from Massachusetts: *Reopening Massachusetts*
<https://www.mass.gov/news/reopening-massachusetts-baker-polito-administration-initiates-transition-to-first-phase-of>

For questions or concerns related to the contents of this memo, please contact NGA staff:

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