



Updated May 8, 2020

## Child Care and COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Providers

*Note: This information will be updated frequently. Please check back regularly for updates.*

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### GENERAL

**How do I get information about COVID-19 in Utah, including information about symptoms and efforts to prevent spread in my program?**

Information about COVID-19 symptoms and preventative measures as well as who to contact about the virus are available at [coronavirus.utah.gov](https://coronavirus.utah.gov).

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## **SAFETY MEASURES**

### **What signs should I look for to determine if a child or an employee is sick?**

Please use the supplemental guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control in its [guidance for child care programs that remain open](#).

There are six symptoms to look for in children and your program staff:

- (1) Fever
- (2) Dry cough
- (3) Shortness of breath
- (4) Sore throat
- (5) Sudden change in taste or smell
- (6) Muscle aches and pains

If children or employees exhibit these symptoms, health care providers should be contacted to make sure they are healthy enough to be present in child care. In many cases, those symptoms are related to other common illnesses or allergies, but a health provider should still be contacted before interacting with others.

### **What should I do if I am concerned about COVID-19 in my facility?**

Contact your local health department and they will direct you with the appropriate steps to take. To find your local health department visit [ualhd.org](http://ualhd.org). You can also visit [coronavirus.utah.gov](http://coronavirus.utah.gov) for information.

### **Can I deny access to Child Care Licensing and other agency visitors to protect our children from COVID-19?**

No. As long as you are open for business, you are to be in full compliance with licensing rules. This includes permitting staff from Child Care Licensing to enter your program to conduct health and safety inspections.

The Office of Child Care and its partners will not be visiting programs or conducting observations at this time but are available to answer questions. Programs can contact the Office of Child Care Provider Helpline at 866-435-7414 or at [occ@utah.gov](mailto:occ@utah.gov).

### **What safety precautions should I be implementing in our programs to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19?**

On April 29, 2020, the Child Care Licensing program instituted new health and safety protocols that apply to all child care providers. Those protocols were outlined in CCL's [letter](#) issued on that date.

Additional guidance is available from the Centers for Disease Control in their [guidance for child care programs that remain open](#).

Providers must also follow any additional instructions from their local health department.

### **Can I continue to serve children of healthcare workers or should I encourage them to receive care through One Utah Child Care or other child care options?**

If your program is open and you are currently serving children of essential workers while meeting Child Care Licensing's temporary emergency conditions, you should continue to provide child care to those families.

One Utah Child Care programs are mainly to care for those essential employees' school-age children that because of school closures do not have child care services.

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## **CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES)**

### **What happens to subsidies if children temporarily stop attending or I temporarily close because of COVID-19?**

If children have stopped attending or you are temporarily closed, you will continue to receive subsidy payments for eligible families that have not reported a change in providers. Providers should temporarily discontinue reporting a child stopped attending in the Department of Workforce Services Provider Portal, so the payments can continue to be issued based on enrollment. Once the child is enrolled with another provider or if the parent no longer meets the eligibility requirements of the child care program, child care payments for that child will be discontinued.

**Do families still need to pay their child care subsidy program co-payment?**

Beginning May 1, 2020, the Department of Workforce Services will temporarily stop assessing co-payments to families receiving child care subsidy payments. Workforce Services will evaluate this temporary policy change on an ongoing basis and evaluate when it will return to its policy of assessing co-payments. Although this change applies to co-payments assessed by Workforce Services, it does not apply to any additional charges assessed by child care programs.

**Will my program be assessed an overpayment from Workforce Services if a child covered by child care subsidies comes to my program sick and I refuse to allow them to attend out of concern for my staff and other children in my care?**

No. An overpayment will not be assessed in this situation.

**Will the 8-hour rule apply during this time?**

No. During this time, Workforce Services will temporarily waive the 8-hour rule and continue to pay providers for children who remain eligible for Workforce Services child care subsidies and remain enrolled. However, if a parent enrolls a child in a new child care facility, the child is no longer considered enrolled at the first facility and as a result, the first facility will not be paid subsidy funds for that child in future months.

**Will current Workforce Services child care subsidy cases close if parents are not working?**

Parents must meet the eligibility program requirements to remain eligible. In most instances, providers will still receive payment for families covered by child care subsidies even if they are no longer bringing children to your program as long as they are still enrolled. If the parent reports a change in providers, they are no longer considered enrolled. No payment will be issued the following month.

**What if a parent needs full-time care for a child who is now out of school but their subsidy payment is only for part time afterschool care?**

Payment increases may be available for children increasing from part-time to full-time care; however, a family will not receive additional funds if the child is already receiving the maximum amount of care allowable on their case.

For any child that changes to full-time, please report the child's full name, case number and a description of the changes in care to [occ@utah.gov](mailto:occ@utah.gov). The parent may also contact Workforce Services to report this change.

**What changes do I need to report in the Workforce Services Provider Portal?**

At this time, child care providers must continue to report changes such as custom rates and credits in a timely manner to avoid payment errors.

Until further notice, providers should not report when a child is no longer attending. During this time, child care subsidies will continue to be paid to providers based on enrollment of children covered by subsidies, unless the family notifies Workforce Services that it has changed providers or if the parent no longer meets the eligibility requirements of the child care program.

**If my facility is forced to temporarily close and families choose other providers, I am concerned I will go out of business. Is the state considering the long-term effects this may have on the child care industry if programs are forced to close?**

The Office of Child Care shares these concerns. Although we do not have any immediate solutions to address this scenario, we will regularly re-evaluate and explore options to minimize the fiscal impact on providers.

**Who should I contact with questions about subsidy payments?**

Questions for Workforce Services should be directed to the Office of Child Care Provider Helpline email at [occ@utah.gov](mailto:occ@utah.gov) or call 866-435-7414, option 5 then 1.

**Who should I contact with questions about child care licensing?**

Contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 888-287-3704.

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## **STAFFING & RATIOS**

**Can I increase ratios and groups sizes going over my approved capacity to help with the need for child care?**

No.

**I have several employees who are either sick or at high risk because of their age and therefore, unable to work. What do I do if they decide to stay home?**

For licensed child centers, Child Care Licensing has an Emergency Ratio Variance in place to assist you. Please consult the [center interpretation manual](#) for more information. The explanation of these variances are discussed on section 10, page 2 of the manual.

Family licensed centers have the ability to use an emergency substitute as it is also stated in rule.

**Will I be able to use substitute teachers who have not received a background check or health and safety training if I have staff who are sick?**

No.

**Will background checks still be processed by Child Care Licensing?**

Yes. At this time, Child Care Licensing is processing background checks but these checks will be expedited. In addition, there will temporarily be no fees charged for background checks.

**Is the government shutting down facilities with more than 20 children in care?**

No. Child Care Licensing issued new rules on April 29, 2020, that explains the group size restrictions in place during this temporary period.

For both licensed homes and centers, the provider must not go over their approved capacity, and must limit groups to 20 or less individuals including children, household members and staff. If there is more than one group, those groups must be separated by full, solid walls that are higher than 6 feet.

**Do the emergency child care site ratios, capacity and group sizes apply to all child care providers who remain open and operating as usual?**

No. Although they are similar at this time, there are several differences. Child Care Licensing sent an [Emergency Conditions for Child Care Providers COVID-19 document](#) to all child care providers. This document outlines the standards for all open child care providers, including ratios, capacity, and group sizes.

Emergency Child Care approved sites have additional restrictions. To name a few, they cannot care for more than 24 children in centers and no more than eight children in homes. They are also required to always have two caregivers with every group of children and no more than 32 individuals present at the facility for centers, including children and staff.

**If I close my program and re-open as an Emergency Child Care program but do not want to be a One Utah Child Care site, will I be eligible to receive funding from One Utah Child Care?**

No.

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**SCHOOL CLOSURES & DISMISSALS**

**Will Child Care Licensing close child care programs in areas in which a school or school district is closed?**

Child Care Licensing is not closing any child care facilities, but it is requiring all Utah child care providers to follow new emergency conditions.

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## **CHILD CARE CENTER CLOSURES & LICENSING**

**I am worried about the financial impact to my business if there are extended quarantines and this is impacting my decision to close my program. What should I do?**

Before making any decisions about closing your program, contact your local health department and they will direct you with the appropriate steps to take. You can also visit [coronavirus.utah.gov](https://coronavirus.utah.gov) for information.

If your program is temporarily losing enrollment and that is causing you to consider closing during this time, please contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 1-888-287-3704 before making this decision.

**What is the Office of Child Care doing to support programs that are remaining open despite decreasing enrollment?**

On April 15, 2020, the COVID-19 Child Care Task force and the Office of Child Care released the Child Care Operations Grant. This grant utilizes federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funding to support child care programs that are open and operating during the pandemic. For additional information, including frequently asked questions and the agreement to receive funds, visit the “Utah Child Care Operations Grant” section at <https://jobs.utah.gov/covid19/covidocc.html>.

**How do I know if I should close my child care center?**

If you are contemplating closing due to health risks in your community or in your program, Child Care Licensing recommends that providers first contact their local health department to discuss those concerns.

If your program is temporarily losing enrollment and that is causing you to consider closing during this time, please contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 888-287-3704 before making this decision.

**If I decide to close my child care center, am I required to report the closure?**

Yes. If you are closing your center, please contact your licensor or Child Care Licensing at 888-287-3704 before making that decision.



### **Will I lose my license if I temporarily close?**

Child Care Licensing will not close your license as long as you are only closed temporarily and wish to remain active. You should contact CCL to update them on your plans.

### **A child care program may close temporarily or close permanently during the COVID-19 crisis. What is the difference between a temporary closure and a permanent closure?**

**Temporary** closure means that the provider **does not lose** their license. With one exception, closing **temporarily** is mainly the provider's decision. Being temporarily closed means that the facility is not serving children at the moment, but could re-open when the provider decides it is safe to do so. The provider will have to contact CCL to let them know when they close temporarily and when they decide to reopen. The exception is when the local or state health department orders child care facilities to temporarily close. If that is the case, the same authority that ordered the closure will decide when it is safe to open again.

For a temporary closure, CCL will not deactivate the facility's license. This means that the provider will not have to apply for a new license once it is safe to open. They will just start serving children as they were before the temporary closure because they do not lose their license.

**Permanent** closure means the provider **does lose** their license. A **permanent** closure can also be the provider's or the health department's decision. A permanent closure means that the provider is closed for business and that, in order to open again, they will have to apply for a new license and complete the entire whole licensing process before they are allowed to open. If the provider decides to permanently close, they will have to let CCL know. The health department may permanently close a facility if the provider does not abide by the rules and additional protocols set for the COVID-19 emergency situation.

**Do I need to apply to receive Emergency Child Care approval through Child Care Licensing to remain open?**

No. To remain open, currently licensed providers just have to agree in writing to the temporary conditions stated in [the letter sent by CCL on April 29, 2020](#).

Providers will not be allowed to stay open until they have agreed in writing and follow the new requirements issued by CCL on April 29, 2020.

**If I close my center due to low enrollment, can I participate in the One Utah Child Care system?**

Programs that are closed may be eligible to provide child care services to essential employees through the One Utah Child Care system. Please review the [One Utah Child Care Providers Overview](#) to learn about the specific requirements for One Utah Child Care participants. This document provides all program details.

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**AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS**

**If we offer virtual, interactive programming to families for at least three hours per day, does our program still qualify for reimbursement or do we physically have to have kids in our facility?**

This depends on the funding source of the grant your program receives through the Office of Child Care (OCC). Most of the funding that the Office of Child Care provides to programs to provide afterschool services requires programs to provide direct child care services. Please contact your OCC Program Specialist if you have questions regarding the ability to invoice OCC for virtual programming. Grantees are also encouraged to contact the Utah State Board of Education about the availability of its funding for virtual, interactive programming.

**How will my grant be affected if my program is unable to participate in the One Utah Child Care program?**

Programs may continue to invoice the Office of Child Care for afterschool activities that are provided to school-age children on-site. If your program is unable to provide direct afterschool programming, grant funds will not be available during this time unless you are a Teen Afterschool Program (TAP) grantee, in which case you may be able to invoice for onsite or virtual programming that addresses TANF Purpose 3. Programs that continue to provide these services should contact their Office of Child Care Program Specialist to discuss options available for providing these services during the COVID-19 crisis.

**Can our employees continue to be paid for participating in training through UAN, as long as hours and course completion are documented?**

If the program is operating within the One Utah Child Care system or is providing onsite care to children, employees can be paid to participate in professional development activities. If the only activity in which your program is engaged is remote professional development activities then grant funds cannot be utilized because it falls outside the scope of the legal agreement between the Department of Workforce Services and the afterschool program.

**If our staff are working to support other agencies, such as school district food services, can we be reimbursed for their pay?**

No. This is not an allowable expense for reimbursement.

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**OTHER**

**Will I continue to receive payments through the Child and Adult Care Food Program during this time?**

Yes. The food program is continuing to provide their services and payments for children attending your program. Please contact your individual food provider with any questions or concerns you may have.

**If a program needs to close for a short period of time due to the COVID-19, will insurance cover the cost of the facility that has closed?**

This would be a question you should ask your insurance agent. Some businesses do have an emergency rider for natural disasters or national emergencies. COVID-19 has been listed as a national emergency, so it is possible your insurance may cover the cost of the day to day operations until you can open again.

**Can providers require payment from private pay families to hold their spots while child care is not provided?**

Private business owners set their own policies and practices. However, child care providers are encouraged to be mindful of the impact COVID-19 is having on our overall community.

**How is COVID-19 impacting the Child Care Quality System?**

The Office of Child Care is accepting applications for a Child Care Quality System certified quality during the COVID-19 outbreak. In an effort to follow the Utah Department of Health recommendation of practicing social distancing to reduce the spread of COVID-19, CCQS on-site visits and observations are postponed until further notice.

Programs will be contacted when we are able to resume on-site visits. At that time applicants will receive more information about initial visits and observations, including the month observations will be completed and the selection of blackout dates.

The 12-month documentation period will not be delayed; it will continue to be based the month the application was submitted. This includes completing and submitting documentation for professional development for staff, directors and business administrators; family engagement; and facility awards. Programs can find a list of online Career Ladder approved courses available at <https://urpd.usu.edu/professional-development/approved-career-ladder-courses>.

If the program currently has a certified quality rating, to prevent a lapse an application must be submitted during the fourth month prior to the expiration date of your current certified quality rating.

**I am receiving a weekly payment for the care of school-aged children of eligible essential employees. Do children need to be attending child care for my child care program to receive payment?**

Yes. This temporary benefit provided to Utah's essential employees with school-age children is designed to support those workers who had a new child care need and expense when schools closed and, without child care, would not be able to work. If parents are working from home, even if they are essential employees, payments will not be made.

**Are there a minimum number of hours an approved school-age child of an essential employee needs to attend my program in a given week in order for the Office of Child Care to issue payment?**

No. However, the school-aged child is required to attend child care at least one day during the week. This attendance is verified with attendance records submitted by your program with your invoices.

**How long will the payments for the school-age children of essential employees be made by the Office of Child Care?**

This temporary benefit will expire on June 30, 2020. The program was established to support essential employees with a new, unanticipated child care expense that occurred when Utah schools closed and designed to continue until the end of the school year. On June 30, 2020, families needing assistance to pay for the costs of child care for their school-aged children should contact the Department of Workforce Services to determine if they are eligible for child care assistance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, income eligibility thresholds to receive assistance are temporarily raised.

**How is a “school-aged” child defined in order for my child care expenses to be covered temporarily by the Office of Child Care?**

A school-aged child is one who is between the ages of 6 years old and 12 years old. The child needed to be 6 years old during the enrollment period, which began April 8, 2020, and continued through April 15, 2020.