

March 18, 2020

*A Message about the Coronavirus and Our Response*

Dear Early Childhood Partners,

We hope this message finds you, your colleagues, family, and friends all safe and healthy as we face the challenges of coping with the outbreak of the Coronavirus and the rapid changes it is bringing to our daily lives. This message brings you our heartfelt wishes for your continued good health and safety, along with some information about what we are working on, including advocacy for the early childhood system and the latest news about new policies to support child care programs.

**Our work continues.** Here at the NC Early Education Coalition, we are all working remotely from our homes, and the staff will continue to be available to you via email and through social media. All Coalition and Think Babies™ NC meetings will continue and take place virtually. **New website resources:** Please visit our website ([www.ncearlyeducationcoalition.org/coronavirus](http://www.ncearlyeducationcoalition.org/coronavirus)) for a consolidated collection of information and resources for parents and child care programs about the Coronavirus. We will be updating this page regularly, with the goal of making our communications more routine - just weekly, unless there is breaking, urgent news.

**Our advocacy for children and families and the early education system continues.** We are also continuing our work to advocate for resources and support for the early childhood system and for what all babies, young children, and their families need to cope with this crisis. We have been working with the NC Department of Health and Human Services, DCDEE, the NC Child Care Resource and Referral System, and other state and national early childhood partners. We are also communicating with policymakers and encourage you to take a few moments to complete the following actions: [contact your U.S. Senators](#) to urge them to pass paid leave, emergency financial assistance, and health care support; [contact your Members of Congress](#) to ask them to include specific support for child care in their COVID-19 response.

We recognize that the early childhood system is likely to suffer severe hardships. Programs will close and perhaps some will not be able to reopen because of the financial hardships they are facing. We are so concerned about all of the early educators who live paycheck to paycheck because of low wages and often have no access to health care.

We know that families are facing new challenges as well. Parents are making new child care arrangements as their child care programs close, and some parents are going to continue to need child care because their employers are still operating or perhaps they are essential workers in the health care or emergency services sectors. Other parents will lose their jobs and struggle financially.

**Here is a summary of what's at the top of our list now about what's needed and what we are advocating for with our state and national policymakers:**

- Financial assistance for child care programs via Child Care Subsidies and NC Pre-K
- Financial assistance for child care teachers and staff who continue to work and for those who become unemployed as child care programs close
- Changes in policies regarding family subsidy eligibility to ensure that no family loses their eligibility and/or child care slot during these times
- Emergency assistance, such as low-interest loans, for child care programs to stay open, or rebuild their programs
- Support for parents and other essential workers in finding and affording child care
- Emergency health care access for parents and early educators who may not have health insurance
- Emergency food assistance for children and families, especially those children who relied on their child care programs for nutritious meals

**Our state leaders continue to work on supporting children and families and the early childhood education system.**

For Child Care Programs, we want you all to know that the Governor's Office, DHHS/DCDEE, and the NC CCR&R Network are working hard to put new policies and procedures in place. Here is a brief summary of what we know has happened and some additional resources from our early childhood partners:

- **Health and Safety Guidance:**
  - [Click here for detailed guidance](#) to help child care facilities make informed decisions about COVID-19 and minimize the risk of exposure to both the staff and the children in their care.
  - [Click here for a list of child care health consultants](#) assigned to each county who are available to answer questions.
- **Financial support for Child Care programs:**
  - Child Care Subsidy: for the month of March, all centers will receive full subsidy payment for each child enrolled in their facility according to each child's plan of care.
  - NC Pre-K: Pre-K programs will be paid in full for the entire month of March regardless of child attendance or closure.

- Emergency Loans: [Gov. Cooper requested](#) that the U.S. Small Business Administration grant North Carolina an emergency declaration that would allow for small businesses economically affected by the coronavirus to receive loans.
- **Regulatory Flexibility:**
  - DCDEE is actively working to identify policy and regulatory requirements that can be temporarily waived, while still ensuring the health, safety and well-being of children. [Click here for a chart that shows which rules now have some flexibility.](#)
  - During the crisis, all monitoring visits and environmental rated license assessments will not take place. This temporary change **does not** include investigations of complaints and investigations of child maltreatment

**We want to hear from you about your concerns and what you think is needed. Help guide and inform our work.** As we continue to work with our early childhood partners, state agencies, and policymakers, we want to hear from you about how this is impacting you and what support you think is needed. [Please visit our website to share your story with us.](#)

We know that we will come through this crisis because we trust that we will find new ways to build connections and community during these challenging times. Our state is full of people with big passion, big hearts, and big ideas for how to build the best early childhood system.

Please continue to be well and stay safe, and let's stay connected. Thank you for all that you do for young children and families and the early childhood education system.

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NC Early Education Coalition