Tennessee Partners with the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee to Provide Free Child Care to Essential Workers

Parents working in essential jobs can access free child care during the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency

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NASHVILLE – The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is announcing new child care assistance to support families that are serving the state in essential workforce positions. Through payment assistance and a network of temporary care locations, parents who work as essential employees can access child care at no cost during the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency until June 15, 2020.

The COVID-19 Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance program is designed to help support essential workers so they can stay on the job during the COVID-19 emergency. Applications for payment assistance will be accepted online throughout the state of emergency here . After an essential employee is approved for the program, TDHS will make arrangements to pay for child care at the TDHS licensed program where the child is currently served.

For those parents whose children are not already receiving care at a licensed program, you can find a list of licensed child care agencies that are open and able to accept children of essential workers online on the TDHS website here . Once the child is enrolled at a TDHS licensed program and the essential employee is approved for payment assistance, TDHS will make arrangements to pay for that child care as well.

TDHS is also partnering with the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee to establish free child care for school aged children of essential workers. Through this partnership, the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs will establish a network of temporary/emergency child care locations across the state. Essential employees with school aged children who need care will be able to register at these locations and access care at no charge during the COVID-19 state of emergency. Parents seeking care at these temporary locations, do not need to apply with TDHS first.

As they are established, a listing of YMCA and Boys & Girls Club temporary/emergency care locations will be available for the YMCA here and the Boys & Girls Clubs here .

To be eligible for either program, parents must be employees of a healthcare entity, law enforcement, first responders (EMS, Fire Departments, etc.), corrections officers, military, activated national guard, human and social services workers, postal workers, transportation employees, restaurant workers or grocery workers. TDHS hopes to lessen the financial burden for these essential employees, whether they are using licensed child care or accessing a temporary child care location.

“Our first responders, medical professionals, and other essential workers who are continuing to serve citizens each day are the heartbeat of Tennessee right now,” said TDHS Commissioner Danielle W. Barnes. “We want to support these families the best we can and make sure that child care is accessible to them, so they can focus on their critical role is serving our communities.”

“We know that essential workers are putting themselves on the frontlines every day to provide services that our community desperately needs during this time,” said Jerry Martin, chair of the Tennessee State Alliance of YMCAs and President and CEO of the YMCA of Memphis and the Mid-South. “This is just one way the YMCA is able to support families, making sure that essential workers can have peace of mind that their children are being cared for in a safe place. We are glad to be able to join with DHS in subsidizing this care to make it available at no charge.”

“The Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee is proud to answer our state’s call to provide childcare for essential service employees in all three of Tennessee grand divisions,” said Ryan Hughes Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee. “Knowing firsthand what it means to have a spouse on the front lines I am proud that we can provide a safe place for youth to go during this time and receive innovative, high quality programs designed to empower youth to excel in school and lead healthy, productive lives.”

The COVID-19 Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance program and partnership with the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee follows other important moves TDHS has made to support child care needs during the pandemic emergency.

Last month, TDHS began offering $10 million in grant assistance to licensed child care agencies to support financial losses and expenses created by the pandemic. The department also relaxed certain guidelines to allow organizations flexibility in delivering care under these unique circumstances while continuing to provide technical support to ensure the health and safety of the children.

Funding for the COVID-19 Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance and other child care programs is provided through the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) that provides funding to state programs that offer assistance to low-income families through subsidized child care, activities and services to improve the quality and availability of child care, and the regulation of child care agencies throughout the state.

Learn more about the Tennessee Department of Human Services at www.tn.gov/humanservices .

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