State Agencies Collaborate to Create COVID-19 Essential Worker Health Care Fund

Aug 27, 2020

TOPEKA — Governor Laura Kelly, along with multiple state agencies, announced today a collaborative effort to allocate $8 million in federal funds Kansas received under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to cover health care expenses for early childhood professionals and other essential workers who contracted COVID-19.

"The dedication and selflessness displayed by Kansas essential workers has been critical to our recovery efforts across the state in cities big and small and rural communities," **Governor Laura Kelly said.** "They risk their health each and every day to help others and these funds make it possible for the state of Kansas to help cover expenses in the unfortunate cases when they contract COVID-19."

The Essential Worker Health Care Fund involves collaboration between the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) as the lead entity, the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS), and the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF). KDHE's Special Health Care Needs (SHCN) program will oversee the funds and process applications. Applications will be available online

and include a release of information to verify health status and allow sharing of information related to COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment.

DCF's "Hero Relief Program" website (http://ksherorelief.com/) will be the public-facing marketing and communications platform for the fund. The "Health Care Assistance" portal of the site went live August 24, so Kansans can start applying.

Assistance will be available to essential workers in positions/fields including but not limited to:

- Health Care and Emergency Services
- First Responder
- LTSS – Long-term Services and Supports
- Agriculture & Food Production
- Food Service
- Transportation and Logistics Services
- Building, Construction, and Trades
- Manufacturing and Chemicals
- Energy, Water and Utilities
- Custodial and Waste Services
- Election
- Government Worker (Federal, State, Local/City)
- Education
- Military
- Licensed Child Care
- Frontline Behavioral Health & Social Services
- Home Visiting (local programs serving families with children birth to 5 years)

In order to be considered, individuals must have a COVID-19 positive diagnosis and verify essential worker status.

Assistance will be limited to qualifying medical expense payout of $25,000 for uninsured individuals (no health care coverage) and $15,000 for insured individuals (coinsurance/copays and deductibles).

"In these challenging and uncertain times, the thing we all hold fastest to is our health," **Governor Laura Kelly said**. "It's time to show our gratitude and compassion to the workers and the families who need it most right now and who show their compassion for all of us every day."

In alignment with the Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Committee goal of providing vulnerable populations with access to health services, KDADS, KDHE, DCF, and the KCCTF recommended the creation of a COVID-19 health care expenses relief fund for critical infrastructure and essential workers who contracted COVID-19.

These workers are on the front lines of the pandemic, providing critical services that enable many Kansans to stay safe at home. Applicants must provide proof of employment as a qualifying essential worker during the pandemic.

The SPARK Taskforce is charged with leading Kansas forward in recovery from the far-reaching effects of COVID-19. The SPARK Executive and Steering Committees, in conjunction with the Office of Recovery team, are responsible for the statewide distribution of CARES Act funding.

Applications for more round two funding will be announced soon.

For more information on eligibility and for instructions on how to apply, visit KSHeroRelief.com.

For more information on COVID-19 visit: www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus

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