New Mexico Expands Child Care Eligibility, Guarantees Payments for Child Care Providers During Public Health Emergency

Mar 16, 2020 | Education

SANTA FE – In response to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's March 11 declaration of a public health emergency, the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) have made a series of temporary changes to New Mexico's early childhood policies.

"We recognize that New Mexicans face a range of circumstances and challenges. If you have the flexibility to stay home with your child, we encourage you to do so. If you need child care, we are doing everything in our power to ensure that you have access to healthy and safe care," said Early Childhood Education and Care Department Secretary

Elizabeth Groginsky. “New Mexico is fortunate to have child care providers who are stepping up to support families – and we are here to support them.”

Temporary Changes Affecting Children and Families:

- **Expanding child care for first responders and health providers:** During the public health emergency, CYFD will issue full-time child care assistance contracts to first responders and health providers who need child care. Please call 1-833-551-0518 to connect with the state’s child care Resource and Referral line or go to www.cyfd.org to download a child care assistance application.
- **Enabling family, friends, and neighbors (FFN) to deliver paid child care services:** During the emergency health declaration, the state will temporarily register family, friend and neighbor (FFN) providers who may be eligible to receive child care assistance funding; interested parties can call 1-833-551-0518. Temporary FFN providers will be required to complete a background check, as will all family members over the age of 18 living in their home. Temporary FFN providers will also be required to complete a threehour online health and safety training and an online CPR training.
- Expanding child care access for families: The state has a child care Resource and Referral line to help families find child care (1-800-691-9067; www.NewMexicoKids.org). Families can also contact their CYFD eligibility specialist via phone or email to let them know they now need full-time care; our team across the state will amend the contracts. In addition, all parents receiving child care assistance will have their copays waived during the public health emergency.
- Protecting CYFD assistance benefits for families: Families who choose to keep their children home during the emergency will not lose their CYFD benefits. If a child care center closes and families need services, they may transfer their child care benefits to an alternative CYFD-approved provider — and the state will continue paying subsidies to both providers.
- Ensuring children have access to meals: The state applied for and received a waiver from the USDA which will allow school and non-school sites to provide meals (breakfast and lunch) to all children

under age 18 needing food. Meals are provided “to-go” and must be consumed off-site, following guidelines for social distancing. New Mexicans with questions can call 1-833-551-0518 or email nutrition.program@state.nm.us .

Temporary Changes Affecting Child Care and Pre-K Providers:

- Allowing CYFD-funded pre-K providers to expand play time for children: During this public health emergency, the state’s priority is to assist providers in expanding capacity to ensure that every child who needs it has access to safe, healthy and nurturing care.
- Ensuring continuity of payments for providers: While the state is encouraging child care providers to stay open during this emergency, we understand that individual providers will make choices appropriate to their circumstances. If a center chooses to close, child care payments will continue. As a parent or guardian, if you have the flexibility to stay home with your child, we encourage you to do so. If you need child care and yours has closed, please call the Resource and Referral line to see what options are available in your community.
- Paying licensed providers a premium: If a licensed provider chooses to remain open during the public health emergency to support working parents, the state will pay a differential of $250 per child for all children enrolled in child care assistance. The state will also provide waivers to programs licensed at 3 STAR or above who want to open additional sites during this period. Centers may contact their local licensing office for assistance with obtaining a waiver.
- Partnering with the Public Education Department to provide child care: If you are a child care provider licensed by CYFD and you utilize a public school building, we encourage you to stay open. Our communities need to work together to support child care as you all are supporting children and families in our state. Programs that need assistance working with local school districts can call 1-833-551-0518.
- Expediting background checks to help providers cover staffing shortages: The Department of Public Safety is partnering with CYFD to provide expedited background checks so that child care centers can hire new, temporary employees at child care centers during this the emergency health declaration. New temporary staff will have to complete the online health and safety training at

www.newmexicokids.org and the state will accept an online CPR certification.

- Coordinating food and cleaning supply delivery: The Governor's office, along with a range of public and private partners, is coordinating food and supply deliveries across the state. Beginning Monday, March 16, child care programs will be able to complete a webform at www.newmexicokids.org detailing the food and cleaning supplies they need to serve their children and families. Programs can also email child.care@state.nm.us to
  inform the Early Childhood Education and Care Department about their supply needs. In addition, centers can call 1-833-551-0518 if they need professional cleaning support.
- Providing daily technical assistance and support: Beginning on Monday, March 16, Early Childhood Education and Care Department Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky will host daily calls with child care providers. (Providers who are not already receiving the invitation can email matt.bieber@state.nm.us to be added.) Providers may also call the child care Resource and Referral line at 1-800-691-9067 or e-mail questions or concerns to child.care@state.nm.us. Frequent updates will be provided on www.newmexico.gov.

"In the face of adversity, early childhood education and care leaders from Farmington to Hobbs are stepping up to ensure that children and families have the support they need during this emergency – and we can't thank them enough. We are fortunate to have such a committed and supportive early childhood community," said Early Childhood Education and Care Department Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky.

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Contact: Matt Bieber
Director of Communications
Early Childhood Education and Care Department
matt.bieber@state.nm.us
(505) 629-9675

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Coronavirus Health Hotline

1-855-600-3453

Please use the number above if you have HEALTH related questions about the Coronavirus.

Coronavirus Information Hotline

1-833-551-0518

Please use the number above if you have questions about school closures, job issues etc.

NMDOH Coronavirus Microsite

cv.nmhealth.org

This microsite has been established to be a resource for the public for all things COVID-19

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