DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

News stories

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More funds coming for child care providers

Providers must apply by Feb. 5, 2021, for January, February grants

January 25, 2021

More than 8,250 eligible child care providers who received funding support in December 2020 to ensure the health and safety of children and staff in their programs will be able to receive additional funds for January and February 2021. The application deadline is Feb. 5, 2021. Providers must be operating to be eligible for this funding.

As part of the child care emergency response funding in the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 that was signed into law on Dec. 27, 2020, the Minnesota Department of Human Services will issue approximately $45 million in new January and February COVID-19 Public Health Support Funds for Child Care payments. This is the third round of funding to help providers remain operating.

Beginning Monday, Jan. 25, the department will email links to online application and another form to the providers who are eligible to apply for these funds. Only providers who receive an application link will be eligible to apply. Child Care Aware of Minnesota will, as in previous funding rounds, be available to support providers with the application process.

“Throughout this pandemic, child care providers have given tremendous time and effort to remain open and serve families,” said Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. “Their efforts have provided stable care for children, economic stability for families, and ongoing support for the workforce we need for our emergency response and economic recovery in Minnesota.”

The department already issued payments to:

- More than 7,000 programs, including almost 5,800 family child care providers, more than 1,100 licensed child care centers and almost 100 certified centers (only nonprofit-certified centers were eligible in July and August for summer school-age care) from July through September.
- More than 8,300 programs, including almost 6,300 licensed family child care providers, about 1,500 licensed child care centers and more than 500 certified centers received payments from October through September.

Payment amounts in July to September were $1,200 for licensed family child care and $8,500 for licensed family child care. Eligible certified centers received $8,500 per month in July and August and $3,000 per month in October to December.

These funds help child care providers address the increased costs of implementing public health and safety guidance, so that they can safely offer child care. The child care industry operated on slim margins prior to the pandemic, and these added costs have created significant business challenges for providers across the state. Increased costs include hiring more staff associated with smaller ratios and group sizes; purchasing cleaning supplies; following screening procedures and quarantine periods; providing sick leave, substitute teachers, supports for distance learning and incentive pay; and ensuring other public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Department data from a provider survey in April demonstrate that the number of licensed family child care and licensed centers operating dropped at the beginning of the pandemic, but data from the COVID-19 Public Health Support Funds from July to December show that nearly all licensed child care programs in the state are operating.

"Since the start of the pandemic in Minnesota, child care providers have stepped up to remain operating and serving children, and we're incredibly grateful for their sacrifice," said Erin Bailey, Children's Cabinet executive director and assistant commissioner at Minnesota Management and Budget. "When this is all said and done, there will be heroic stories written about child care providers, who did everything they could to make sure that our children, especially those of frontline workers, had a place of safety, well-being and growth in the middle of a pandemic."

The Department of Human Services plans to use a portion of the new federal funds for child care to support almost 800 new families on the Basic Sliding Fee Program for child care expenses.

"We will continue to work with legislators, providers, advocates and families to develop long-term strategies to support child care providers and the families they serve," said Commissioner Harpstead.

For technical assistance, providers should contact Child Care Aware of Minnesota at 651-290-9704 or supportfunds@childcareawaremn.org (mailto:supportfunds@childcareawaremn.org). For child care resources related to COVID-19, including public health guidance, visit mn.gov/childcare (https://mn.gov/childcare/).

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