Nearly $11 million in federal funds to support essential workers and child care providers in response to COVID-19

April 22, 2020

Governor Janet Mills and Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew announced today that nearly $11 million in federal funds will support access to child care for Maine's essential workers, including health care professionals and first responders, and offer relief for child care providers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Maine has received $10,953,470 through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families' Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program. The CCDBG program helps eligible low-income and working families to afford child care and supports providers in delivering high-quality care. Under the CARES Act, workers deemed essential who are working outside the home (PDF) are now temporarily eligible to receive child care assistance regardless of their income, including health care workers, first responders, emergency medical services personnel, state employees, grocery store staff, environmental services professionals, and others.

Child care providers affected by the pandemic will also receive immediate assistance. Nearly 2,000 providers will receive a one-time stipend, based on their capacity and extent of their current operations. Child care providers will additionally receive support to aid them in resuming operations following the conclusion of the civil state of emergency.

> *"While people throughout Maine are staying home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we all rely on the essential employees, from doctors and nurses to grocery store workers, state employees and others, who are reporting to work each day," said Governor Mills. "This funding will help our essential workers care for their children and support our child care providers."*
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> *"We recognize the challenges that Maine families and child care providers face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic," said DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew. "This funding will help Maine people working on the front lines of this emergency and provide immediate relief for the state's child care providers."*
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> *"Access to child care is a vital resource for working families and that is especially true at this time for essential personnel who we depend upon for critical services," said Todd Landry, Director of the DHHS Office of Child and Family Services. "Today's actions will support our families and providers during the current emergency and as we look forward to recovery."*

Financial assistance will support households where all parents/guardians are essential employees who are reporting to work outside the home and will be paid on their behalf directly to their child care provider.

The new federal funding builds on the strategies Maine DHHS has already implemented to support Maine families and child care providers in response to the pandemic, including:

- Working with child care partners to match working parents (PDF), including those serving in essential response roles, with providers who remain open at this time
- For parents participating in CCSP, DHHS is paying the parent portion of child care costs directly to providers
- Continuing to pay child care subsidy on behalf of children when providers are closed due to COVID-19
- Extending all current CCSP awards for three months to allow families additional time to submit documentation
- Implementing emergency, temporary child care licenses to meet the needs of essential employees
- Regularly distributing guidance to child care providers about appropriate health and safety precautions

Those interested in learning more may visit the Child Care Subsidy section of the Office of Child and Family Services' COVID-19 response page at: www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/COVID-19-response.shtm.

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