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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Announces Launch of Pilot to Provide Dedicated COVID-19 Testing Sites to Child Care Programs, Expanded Resources for Providers

The Department of Early Education and Care, partnering with private, philanthropic funders, will establish pilot testing sites dedicated to child care staff, children and families

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

1/25/2021

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced the launch of a pilot COVID-19 testing program dedicated to providing on-demand PCR testing to child care providers and the families they serve to ensure easy access to testing when there is suspected COVID-19 exposure.

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), partnering with private and philanthropic funders from the **Massachusetts Early Childhood Funder Collaborative** (https://www.maecfunders.org/) and **BayCoast Bank** (https://www.baycoastbank.com/home/home), will launch an eight week pilot, setting up eight rotating drive-through testing sites throughout the Commonwealth, which will be open only to child care providers and individuals affiliated with programs.

In addition, EEC is dedicating $8 million in state and federal funds to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) to distribute to child care providers at no cost. Child care providers will be able to order up to a one-month supply of PPE, including masks for children and adults, gloves, hand sanitizer, and other supplies.

With dedicated testing locations and test results provided within 48 hours, the new testing initiative is an effort to prevent sudden temporary closures of child care programs due to virus exposure. The testing sites – located in Athol, Braintree, Billerica, Dalton, Franklin, Plymouth, Sturbridge and Westfield – will allow child care programs to continue providing care when symptomatic individuals test negative and reopen quicker after potential exposures. The sites were chosen in collaboration with the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the COVID-19 Response Command Center based on distance from a current state-sponsored Stop the Spread testing location and concentration of child care providers.

Anyone affiliated with a child care program who is symptomatic, identified as a close contact or has concerns about exposure, including all staff and their household members as well as children in care and their families, will be eligible for testing at no cost. Each site will have capacity to test approximately 400 people a day.

Tests will be conducted by medical personnel using a simple anterior nasal swab and will be processed by a CLIA-certified laboratory with results available to individuals via a portal in 48 hours or less.

Those receiving a test will need the EEC provider number of the child care program to verify their eligibility. No appointment is necessary, but pre-registration is highly encouraged.

As required by state law, the lab will report results to the state's Department of Public Health. Individuals will be responsible for reporting to their child care provider or employer.

Members of the Massachusetts Early Childhood Funder Collaborative and BayCoast Bank have committed $450,000 to support the initial eight-week pilot, which will provide time to evaluate the efficacy of the testing program and determine next steps. The Massachusetts Early Childhood Funder Collaborative is comprised of individuals and foundations supporting the early childhood sector in the Commonwealth, sharing information and best practices in early childhood philanthropy.

Currently, there are 2,429 center-based programs open and 4,373 family child care homes serving children and their families, which represents approximately 82 percent of pre-COVID child care capacity level. Approximately 125,000 children are enrolled in licensed child care programs each day in Massachusetts.

To learn more about the pilot program, **click here** (/info-details/covid-19-testing-for-child-care).

To order supplemental PPE supplies, **click here.** (/info-details/supplemental-personal-protection-equipment-ppe-for-child-care)

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The Department of Early Education and Care's mission is to support the healthy growth and development of all children by providing high quality programs and resources for families and communities.

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