NJ Human Services Extends COVID-19 Child Care Assistance Programs Through February; Increases Investment in Child Care Subsidy Program

Extensions Include Programs that Help Families During Remote Schooling & Support Child Care Sector;

Increased Subsidy Investment Helps Providers with Jan. 1 Minimum Wage Increase

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(TRENTON) – New Jersey Human Services today announced the state will be extending several COVID-19-related child care assistance programs through the end of February as part of the Department's continued effort to support families and child care providers impacted by pandemic.

The extensions include programs that have helped families pay for child care during remote schooling and support the sustainability of child care providers.

Human Services also recently invested an additional $12.6 million in the child care subsidy program, which helps families with lower-to-moderate incomes who are working, in training or in school afford child care. The increase was effective Jan. 3, helping child care centers implement the Jan. 1 minimum wage increase.

"We are pleased to be able to continue these critical programs," Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman said. "We are providing as much assistance as possible to working families and the child care sector, and will do so for as long as we can. We're especially concerned about data showing how many women have faced difficult decisions to leave the workforce because of the challenges of child care during this crisis. We continue to find ways to support child care throughout New Jersey from all available resources, including the $12.6 million in state funding our Administration has invested to support increased wages for child care providers and workers."

"Child care is a crucial part of our children's future and vital for a strong economy," Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said. "Quality, affordable child care has never been more important. We want families striving every day to get on the best possible financial footing to have the peace of mind that comes from quality child care - now more than ever. We're committed to continuing to look for ways to help."

The following COVID-related child care initiatives will be extended through the end of February:

- **State Child Care Subsidy during School Day:** Extending state child care subsidies for child care during the school day for school-age children 5-to-13 years old. Under this initiative, currently enrolled and newly enrolled school-age children are eligible for state subsidy funding for child care services throughout the school day at licensed child care centers or registered family child care providers. Traditionally, school-age children receive the subsidy for before- and after-school care, but this initiative extends the program to the school day due to remote learning schedules.
- **Child Care Tuition Assistance for Children in Families Earning up to $150,000 and in Remote Learning:** Extending child care tuition assistance for families currently enrolled in this program. Tuition assistance has been made available to families with incomes up to $150,000 not eligible for the state Child Care Subsidy Program but in need of either full- or part-time child care due to their child's school's remote learning schedule. For families who have been approved for this assistance, Human Services will continue to pay their selected providers for their school age children 5-to-13 years old in child care due to remote learning.
- **Supporting Child Care Centers:**
    - Continuing to pay child care providers a supplemental payment of $300 per subsidy-eligible child, including infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children.
    - Continuing to pay child care providers based on the number of enrolled children who receive state assistance in their program, rather than attendance.

Human Services also continues to waive parent copays in the child care subsidy program for parents who request it due to impacts from COVID-19.

Before the pandemic, Human Services reduced copayments by 50 percent for parents who receive state assistance paying for child care, saving New Jersey families $23 million per year.

Under the additional $12.6 million state funding investment, subsidies increased by 3 percent for infant care and 2.5 percent for other age groups.

Before the pandemic, the Murphy Administration had already invested nearly $100 million into New Jersey's child care assistance program - after child care subsidy payment rates had remained relatively flat for a decade - and worked to improve quality and access to child care.

After the recent increase, for example, infant care subsidies have increased by more than 41 percent under the Murphy Administration - from about $724 per month to $1,024. For parents who select an infant care provider with a three-star quality rating from the Grow NJ Kids quality improvement program, that rate jumps even further, reaching $1,126 per month.

For more information on the state's child care program please visit childcarenj.gov.

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