

BUSINESS OFFICE
225 GLENWILD AVENUE BLOOMINGDALE, NJ 07403
(973) 838-0555 (973) 838-1922 Fax

Mr. John Petrelli
Interim Superintendent

Mrs. Eulalia Gillis
Interim Business Administrator/Board Secretary

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COVID-19 Press Information

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Contact: Christine Lee

Press Office: Governor's Office

Email: Christine.Lee@nj.gov

Governor Murphy Announces Child Care Initiative from Coronavirus Relief Fund to Support Working Families

METUCHEN – With the school year starting in New Jersey amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Phil Murphy today announced plans to dedicate \$250 million in funding from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund, which will provide additional support to children and their families as well as for thousands of child care providers with resources. These plans are highlighted in the Governor's FY2021 revised Budget Proposal as part of the state's spending plan for the \$2.39 billion federal Coronavirus Relief Fund.

“Now more than ever, working families need access to child care to balance the many demands they are facing during the ongoing pandemic,” said Governor Murphy. “With these investments, we are ensuring that high quality child care is accessible and affordable for families across the state.”

“Today is an important day. The funding announced is much-needed as we move toward further re-opening of our State,” said Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin. “\$250 million is a huge investment and it offers the support that our State’s hard-working families need as we all wait for the pandemic to subside and guard against a resurgence in the fall. Childcare providers play a critical role for children and their parents who are going to back work in-person. It is vitally important that we support providers and families with restart grants, supplemental funding and tuition scholarships. This is the right thing to do and I thank the Governor for spearheading this initiative.”

“We have long known that quality child care is essential to child development and economic development. Today’s announcement makes clear that, in the face of a pandemic, child care is also essential to helping schools reopen,” said Human Services

Commissioner Carole Johnson. "The Governor and the Department of Human Services are taking these actions to address some of the incredible burden working families are facing as work-from-home and remote learning occur at the same time. Families need relief, and we hope today's actions offer some hope and opportunity for parents to get the support they need."

"The pandemic has reinforced what we already knew -- that access to adequate, affordable and safe childcare is absolutely vital to working parents and New Jersey's families," said Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer. "We are working collaboratively and creatively across State government to expand childcare capacity and ensure that quality care is within reach for every New Jersey family that needs it. Through this initiative, we're working to help families find a balance between professional responsibilities and personal needs through a robust, safe and enriching childcare infrastructure in the Garden State."

The Governor's Child Care Initiative includes the following components:
Supporting Children and Families:

1. The Department of Human Services will now provide state child care subsidies for child care during the school day for school-age children (children age 5 to 13 years old) through the end of calendar year 2020. Participation in the state Child Care Subsidy Program is available to children in families with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level who meet program criteria. For example, a family of three with income up to \$43,440 is eligible to enroll in the program. Today, about 21,000 school-age children receive a state subsidy to support the cost of before- and after-school child care. Under the COVID Child Care Initiative, through the end of the calendar year, currently enrolled and any newly enrolled school-age children will now be eligible for state subsidy funding for child care services throughout the school day. This funding will be used at licensed child care centers or registered family child care providers, and child care providers will be paid the state's subsidy rate for school-age children based on the hours of care needed.
2. The Department of Human Services also will create a new \$150 million program to provide child care support to New Jersey families who are not eligible for the state Child Care Subsidy Program but who are in need of either full or part-time child care due to their child's school's remote learning schedule. This assistance will be available through the end of calendar year 2020 for families with school-age children, 5 to 13 years old, with annual incomes below \$75,000 through an application process. Funding for recipients of this program will be provided directly to the family's selected licensed child care center or registered family child care and providers will be paid the state's subsidy rate for school-age children based on the hours of care needed.

Applications will open in early September. When the process opens, families may submit applications and the department will make awards to participants who meet the eligibility criteria until funding is exhausted. Selected recipients will be eligible for either full- or part-time support based on their families' needs.

Supporting Child Care Re-Opening:

1. To support the reopening and sustainability of child care centers that make it a priority to serve children receiving the state child care subsidy, the Department of Human

Services will provide supplemental payments of \$75 per subsidy-eligible child, per month, including infants, toddlers, and school-age children to providers through the end of the calendar year.

2. The Department of Human Services will make funding available to all licensed child care centers and all registered family child providers in New Jersey that are open or will open by October 1st to manage added operational costs due to new COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. These funds will be available to nearly 6,000 child care providers in New Jersey with increased COVID-related costs, such as purchasing PPE and other supplies and materials, cleaning and sanitation, and other operational needs related to COVID-19 that are eligible expenses for the Coronavirus Relief Fund. Funds will be available as follows:

The new initiative builds on Governor Murphy's ongoing commitment to making child care more affordable and accessible in our State.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Murphy Administration has taken several steps to support child care for families and to support the sustainability of providers including:

1. Increasing investments in child care, including more than \$125 million through two key actions: creating and funding State-subsidized emergency child care for essential workers at the peak of the crisis and having provided the State's child care subsidy to centers based on prior enrollment;
2. Providing up to \$20 million in grants to child care centers and youth camps to assist in meeting COVID-19 related health and safety guidelines;
3. Waiving parent co-pays in the State's child care subsidy program for parents who requested it due to impacts from COVID-19; and
4. Delivering personal protective equipment to emergency child care centers and family child care providers.

Since the beginning of the Governor's term, child care has been a top priority and the Administration has taken action to substantially increase state child care subsidy rates and decrease co-pays for families as we continue to advance quality child care in the State.

All funds will be subject to federal statutes and guidance governing the use of the Coronavirus Relief Fund. Payments must be for necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency that were not accounted for in the FY 2020 budget, and can only cover costs incurred between March 1 and December 30, 2020.

The Administration remains committed to helping New Jersey's families navigate the health and economic challenges resulting from the unprecedented effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.