



District of Columbia's Response to COVID-19: Child Care Actions

Fact Sheet | January 2021

On March 27, 2020, the CARES Act was signed into law, including \$3.5 billion in supplemental appropriations for the Child Care and Development Block Grant to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus. This funding represents a 60% increase in total discretionary appropriations for fiscal year 2020, which amounts to \$9.326 billion. States were given broad flexibility for how to use this funding and have therefore taken a variety of approaches to help address needs of working families and providers through COVID-19. However, as the funds ran out during the ongoing crisis, many states began pulling from other sources to continue supporting parents and providers alike. This fact sheet explains the actions the District of Columbia took to support the child care industry and working parents through 2020.

The District of Columbia received \$6 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act.

The District activated a Child Care Disaster Response plan in response to COVID-19, and strongly encouraged that child care centers follow guidelines on the operating status of public schools, which fully closed. Because of this, for providers that closed, the District continued subsidy payments to providers and offered reimbursements based on enrollment rather than attendance. All parents receiving a subsidy had their copays waived, and families whose 12-month eligibility expired during the public health emergency remained eligible until the District resumed in-person operations. If a facility stayed open, providers were required to report absences based on the existing pre-pandemic monthly policy of 5 unexcused and 15 excused absences.

The District partnered with licensed providers to create six emergency child care sites for frontline workers offered from 6am to 8pm, Monday through Friday. The District helped to alleviate part of the cost of care for families who do not typically qualify for a subsidy.

In early September, the District announced establishment of a "DC Child Care Provider Relief Fund" that provided \$5 million in operational funding to child care programs. Relief funds were granted to all licensed providers, including homes and centers, to ensure an adequate supply of child care during the public health emergency and into the recovery period. Awards varied depending on the type and licensed capacity of each provider, with a minimum award of \$2,091 and a maximum of \$17,889.

Eligible uses of these funds included operating costs and fixed costs, furniture, program materials to meet health and safety guidelines, and/or sanitation or PPE supplies. All programs were to be automatically notified of their award.

The District returned to attendance-based subsidy in November, and programs that remained closed would no longer receive reimbursements.

The District also worked with its partners at the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) to provide more than \$400,000 in grants for a "DC Access to Quality Child Care Expansion COVID-19 Emergency Response Grant" which supports past recipients of a pre-pandemic "DC Access to Quality Child Care Expansion" program. Funds were intended to cover at least one month of operating expenses for any month during which COVID-19 impacted the operations of the child care program.

In December, the District announced it would spend the remaining \$2.8 million of CCDBG funds in emergency grants to support child care providers and help them stay in business. Distribution of the emergency grant funds will prioritize child care providers serving children and families with low incomes, as well as underserved neighborhoods. Additional information on the emergency grants, including how to apply, will be shared with child care providers in January 2021. Also beginning in January, the District will implement a new Public Health Emergency Subsidy Rate that will increase the daily, per-child payment rate, retroactive through December.