



## Florida'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 Florida took to support the child care industry and working parents through 2020.

Florida received \$223.6 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act.

Florida created a Child Care Application and Authorization Form for frontline workers that needed child care. For these individuals, child care was offered for a free or reduced rate from April through June, at which point the continued need for child care was reevaluated. Providers could still charge these parents fees, but the state covered copayments through May.

Beginning March 1, providers that remained open were paid for all lost revenue due to absences. Providers that temporarily closed also continued to be reimbursed based on enrollment. These payments were both for the state's child care subsidy as well as the Voluntary Preschool program. Florida also created a streamlined process for coalitions to purchase supplies on behalf of providers, such as cleaning and protective items. The state extended training and testing requirements for child care staff, including competency exams, through September 2020. Classes were offered online.

On May 28, Florida allocated \$60.9 million from state funds and from existing CCDBG dollars to help pay subsidies based on enrollment and to help providers continue to pay School Readiness and Voluntary Prekindergarten employees. They also continued to cover parent copayments and offered mini-grants to providers to cover infrastructure and cleaning costs.

On June 30, the state announced a two-phase plan for spending \$72 million of the supplemental CCDBG funds through grants based on provider capacity.

In Phase 1, the state distributed \$49 million via Emergency Child Care Relief Grants to providers who were open on April 30. In addition to regular reimbursement rates, providers received a \$500 bonus per child, with a maximum monthly bonus of \$4,000, up to \$12,000 for the 90-day duration. Contracted providers received an additional bonus for serving infants and toddlers or children with special needs.

In Phase 2, the state distributed \$19 million via High-Quality Reopening Support Grants to providers who were closed on April 30 but had reopened or planned to reopen by August 1. Providers had to be rated "high quality" to be eligible.

On September 2, the state announced \$17 million from the CARES Act CCDBG would be used for a third round of grants available to providers who planned to reopen by August 31. With the exception of public and charter school providers, funding was allocated based on attendance, not enrollment. These grants ranged from \$1,496 to \$11,970 depending on provider capacity.

Additionally, the state redirected \$2.4 million from its Preschool Development Grant Funds to support low income and limited English proficient children this fall by giving curriculum guidance to child care providers and digital tools to families.

At the time of publication, Florida had not announced any new plans for continuing to support the child care industry through the winter, nor plans to return to an enrollment-based system.