



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

Illinois received \$118.4 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act.

The state estimated using 50% of these funds to offer increased payment rates for child care providers serving frontline and essential workers, 35% to pay subsidies to both providers based on enrollment, and a portion of the remaining funds to cover child care costs for essential workers who would not otherwise qualify for subsidies. Illinois also provided sanitation and cleaning supplies to child care facilities.

In March, all licensed child care programs were required to close, and concurrently, the state deemed child care essential and created a new emergency license for programs that allowed them to re-open and continue operating. Home-based providers could operate under license-exempt status for up to six children during the stay-at-home order. After an initial four-week period, providers without an emergency license were eligible to apply to help expand availability throughout the state. By June 1, most of Illinois had begun to reopen. Licensed child care centers and home-based providers were allowed to reopen with limited capacity under previously existing licensing standards. Before reopening, providers were required to develop an agency action plan and an enhanced risk management plan in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

To support child care providers operating at reduced capacity, the state initiated a \$270 million Child Care Restoration Grant funded by the state's Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency (CURE) Fund. Applications opened in July and awards were distributed in August. This funding was awarded to nearly 5,000 providers across the state.

On August 7, Illinois announced that providers were eligible to receive subsidy payments for care provided to school age children learning remotely through October.

On December 23, Governor Pritzker (D) announced an additional \$20 million in CARES Act funding would be allocated for covering all eligible days of subsidy payments for December, January, and February, based on enrollment—regardless of actual child attendance. This effort helped thousands of families: about 98,000 children were enrolled in the subsidy program at the time these payments began. The state also allowed all licensed family-based care providers to return to full capacity in December and all licensed centers in January. Governor Pritzker announced that he would also reduce family copays to no more than \$1.25 per month for January and February.