



Nebraska'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, however, by September, many states began pulling from other sources to continue supporting parents and providers alike. This fact sheet explains the actions Nebraska took to support the child care industry and working parents through 2020.

Nebraska received \$20 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act. The state distributed all supplemental CCDBG funds through grants to support providers during the pandemic.

Nebraska's Child Care Relief Fund provided \$1,000 grants for providers that remained open to serve children and families. Private child care foundations funded 800 of the 1,000 applications received, while the state used its supplemental CCDBG funds to fund the remaining 200 applications. To support essential workers in finding available options, Nebraska collaborated with private child care organizations to develop an online database that referred parents to providers with vacancies. The state planned on using CARES Act dollars to merge this system with the existing referral system for future use.

The state also offered providers that remained open subsidy payments based on licensed capacity, rather than attendance. The state extended this policy in August without details as to when payments would revert back.

For providers that temporarily closed, the state offered a one-time Incentive to Reopen Child Care Programs grant incentivizing them to reopen, with a \$2,000 award amount for family providers and \$3,000 for centers so long as they could commit to reopening within 30 days.

Nebraska also offered one-time Child Care Stabilization grants of \$3,500 for family providers and \$5,500 for center-based providers.

To assist families with school-age care need during the 2020-2021 school year, Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services released guidance informing providers that they could receive subsidy payments for school-age care provided to subsidy-eligible students during virtual school hours.

Additionally, between October 1 through January 31, the state offered two grants to specifically support school-age care providers. Centers providing care for school-age children could receive \$5,550 in Stabilization Grant funding to reimburse their operating expenses incurred during the fall if they were either open or agreed to reopen within 30 days of receiving an award. Alternatively, these providers could receive a \$3,000 Incentive to Reopen grant to reimburse expenses associated with reopening if they agreed to reopen within 30 days of receiving the award.

As of December 1, over \$3.5 million in CARES Act funding had been distributed via the state's child care grant programs although additional funds were still being processed. And as of the first week of January 2021, grant applications to all providers were still open, but the state had yet to announce any further information on whether enrollment-based subsidy payments would continue into 2021.