



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

South Dakota received \$9 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act.

The state used a portion of its supplemental CCDBG funds to offer a one-time grant to licensed providers through June. Awards ranged from \$2,520 to \$26,000 according to provider size and type. On August 18, the Department of Social Services reported that \$3 million of the state's supplemental CCDBG funds were distributed to providers through this program.

South Dakota did not mandate all child care programs to close but allowed each provider to determine whether to stay open or close on their own. Further, the state considered COVID-19 a "special circumstance" and therefore, programs were permitted to have additional children in care until schools reopened. No more than two additional children were permitted in family child care homes, no more than three additional children for group homes, and no more than an additional 20 percent of the licensed capacity for centers. Any additional children were to be included in staff-to-child ratio requirements. The state did not announce any subsidy payment changes throughout the emergency.

The state asked child care providers to be flexible with staff who were ill or caring for sick family members and recommended contingency planning for staff shortages in order to meet staff-to-child ratios. South Dakota also asked providers to work with parents to identify children with special health conditions that placed them at higher health risk so that they could take appropriate precautions. The state also recommended avoiding mixed-age classrooms, staggering transition times, limiting visitors, and adhering to other health and safety guidelines to reduce the spread of the virus.

In September, South Dakota announced a second round of provider grants funded with its remaining \$5 million in supplemental CCDBG dollars. By November, providers that received the first grant automatically received a second grant award, while other providers were required to apply for grants.

At the time of publication, the state had not announced any plans to continue supporting providers or parents into 2021.