

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

Hawaii received \$12 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act.

In late March, Hawaii took advantage of the flexibilities provided in the CARES Act to expand qualifications to the child care subsidy program to families of essential workers regardless of income. Families, including those who already participated in the program, were able to use their subsidy to hold their spot at a licensed and registered provider until child care operations resumed. Furthermore, families facing financial hardship due to COVID-19 could also request waivers for co-payments.

Hawaii maintained a list of licensed and registered child care facilities that remained open and available for the children of essential workers. Facilities interested in operating emergency child care for essential workers that were not licensed by the state DHS could submit a request for review to participate.

At the end of May, Hawaii's Department of Human Services offered contracts to licensed child care providers and A+ rated child care sites at schools to cover the costs of health and safety measures necessary to resume operation. The deadline to apply was July 31.

To support home-based providers during the summer, the Hawaii Community Foundation established a grant program to provide relief to licensed home-based child

care providers, support providers serving essential workers, and prevent permanent child care closures. Funds were awarded in the amount of \$1,000 to \$3,000 per applicant. This program was funded by the Home Grown program and the Hawaii Resiliency Fund of Hawaii Community Foundation.

Hawaii temporarily increased its subsidy payment rates, including those for school age children, from August 2020 through December 2021 to offer additional support to providers through the fall. However, it did not announce whether it would offer subsidy payments based on enrollment or attendance through the fall and into the winter.

This fall, Hawaii announced \$15 million of the state's CRF dollars would go to two new grant programs, with a goal to provide licensed child care programs with one-time, flexible funding to ensure the continuity of their operations, prevent permanent closure and/or enable them to re-open their programs safely and with financial resources, as well as assist them in meeting the additional health and safety requirements. Applications closed at the end of October, and all but approximately \$100,000 had been spent by the end of December.

Hawaii has not announced any new plans to continue supporting child care programs through 2021.