

Exempt Emergency Child Care Program

Guidance for Providers

To slow the spread of coronavirus, [Governor Baker issued an emergency order on March 18](#) temporarily closing all early childhood education programs across the State of Massachusetts. This will remain in effect through Phase 1 of reopening and may be extended as needed. This closure applies to all center-based and family child care programs. It does not apply to residential schools, community group homes, temporary shelters, transition-to-independent living facilities, teen parent programs, and DYS secure facilities. The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has established a new process and guidance to sustain certain childcare services as outlined below:

Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs (EECCPs) will support essential workers and vulnerable families that have **no other option** for childcare services (e.g., family members). Families should be seeking alternative non-group care settings for child care to abide by social distancing during this public health emergency. EECCPs are for when all other non-group-care settings have been exhausted and families have no other options.

In light of the [separate March 23 order designating certain "Essential Workforces."](#) EEC is now modifying its guidance to explain that priority access to emergency child care shall be given to vulnerable children, and the children of families designated as "[COVID-19 Essential Workforces](#)," with emphasis on those in the health care, public health, and human services and law enforcement, public safety, and first responder fields. EECCP providers, authorized through a unique request approval process by EEC, are required to follow this prioritization guidance. Please see EEC's [Emergency Child Care Policies](#) for more information on prioritization as businesses begin going back to work. If you have any questions about your local process for prioritizing, please reach out to your Regional EEC Office.

Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs will be the only child care programs that are allowed to operate during this time. This prioritizes public health and safety while maintaining critical service.

If you have a specific arrangement with an employer or partner to serve their essential worker population, please inform your EEC Regional Office to seek approval.

If you are interested in opening a child care program to specifically cater to your workplace, we encourage you to find a local partner who would be able to operate within your suggested temporary setting. Please reach out to your EEC Regional Office to seek approval.

EECCPs will operate under the following guidance:

- Under Executive Order No. 591 declaring a State of Emergency, EECCPs will receive a legal authorization to operate valid until the end of Phase 1 of reopening and may be extended as needed.

- Programs operating without this legal authorization as an Exempt Emergency Child Care Program will be deemed illegal.
- Providers are required to prioritize attendance based on the guidance issued by the Governor in [COVID-19 Order No. 13](#).
- EECCPs cannot charge families for enrollment. Programs may allow for donations, provided that any solicitation for donations clearly states that no family will be given preferential treatment for making a donation. In rare circumstances, EECCPs that have an existing relationship with an employer of essential services may seek an exemption from their Regional Director to continue charging fees.
- EECCPs will be provided a small grant through at a flat rate to help defray the cost of operations. Please refer to the fiscal policy on EEC's website for additional guidance and connect with your Regional EEC office if you have outstanding questions.
- Authorized center-based childcare settings can serve up to 20 children per classroom with minimum of 2 adults in every classroom unless you have specific approval from EEC. Programs are encouraged to operate with a maximum of 10 children and adults per group, as feasible, and structure their program to abide by social distancing protocols. Group sizes must remain stable and be maintained as low as possible within the program's design.
- Authorized home-based childcare settings can serve up to 8 children with a minimum of 1 adult in the home. Programs are encouraged to structure their program to abide by social distancing protocols and reduce group size if needed to promote social distancing.
- EECCPs have the discretion to determine their own hours so long as programs are adequately staffed and communicated to parents.
- EECCPs are required to be accessible by phone for parents seeking drop in services 7 days a week unless there is an alternative arrangement in place with EEC.
- EECCPs must follow health and safety protocols provided by EEC in, "Recommended Health and Safety Protocols for EECCPs."
- EECCP employees must have completed the EEC Background Record Check process or have emergency approval by EEC to be in the classroom. All adults with access to children during the EECCP operations must be reported to EEC.
- A directory of all approved EECCPs will be regularly maintained on EEC's website at https://eeclead.force.com/EEC_ExemptEmergencyChildCare.
- Services will be on an emergency basis only and will not be operating under current childcare enrollment processes. All programs should be working with parents to find non-group-care arrangements for their children and only use EECCPs in time of emergency when no alternative care can be found.
- EECCPs may take reservations for care up to one week in advance at their own discretion. EECCP's are permitted to implement their own reservation system, provided

that it abides by the prioritization policies set forth by Governor Baker's executive order and through Phase 1 of reopening.

- EECCPs that are unable to accommodate a reserved child care slot **MUST** notify the family immediately to allow them to secure an alternative care option.
- Providers must ensure that all guardians of children served in EECCPs complete a medical form and waiver provided by EEC. NOTE: These have been updated and simplified as of 3/22/20.
- EECCPs are required to participate in phone calls daily with EEC licensors to report the number of children served.
- EECCPs cannot provide transportation to programs. At this time, resources must be focused on providing emergency care to vulnerable children and the families of essential workers.

Interested Providers can **complete the online application** here: <https://bit.ly/2vS3777>

Frequently asked questions can be found on the EEC emergency child care website: https://eeclead.force.com/apex/EEC_ChildCareEmergencyProcedure