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 until June 29, 2020 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 an approval process by EEC, are required to follow this prioritization guidance. 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.

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 11:59pm on June 28, 2020 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, EECCP’s 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 that would like to propose a different model designed to specifically meet the parameters of the facility are encouraged to talk to their regional office.

- Authorized home-based childcare settings can serve up to 8 children with a minimum of 1 adult in the home. Providers that would like to propose a different model designed to specifically meet the parameters of their home are encouraged to talk to their regional office.

- EECCPs have the discretion to determine their own hours so long as programs are adequately staffed.

- 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 DPH and EEC to address the COVID-19 health and safety standards.

- EEC encourages EECCPs to follow social distancing guidance put forth by EEC in a separate guidance document.

- 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 EECCP’s 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.

- 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 is 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