



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Early Education and Care

TEMPORARY POLICY STATEMENT	
Prioritization of Essential Workers Eligible for Utilization of EECCP Services	Field Operations – Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs
Effective Date: June 1, 2020	

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) understands that child care is a critical service and is relied upon by essential workers who are needed to address the health, safety, and welfare of the Commonwealth’s residents. To facilitate the continued availability and operations of health, safety, and other crucial human services during the COVID-19 State of Emergency, EEC requires Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs (EECCP) to prioritize the provision of care to households who hold essential roles in our communities to help maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the Commonwealth’s residents. Priority access to emergency child care shall be given to vulnerable children, and the children of families designated as ["COVID-19 Essential Workforces,"](#) including but not limited to: health care workers, essential state and human service workers, COVID-19 health workers, grocery store employees, emergency response personnel, law enforcement, transportation and infrastructure workers, sanitation workers, DCF-involved families, and families living in shelters.

On May 11th, Governor Baker announced a four-phased approach to reopening the economy, with the goal of gradually allowing certain businesses, services, and activities to resume. As Massachusetts prepares for the first phase of reopening of additional businesses and more families are returning to work, EEC anticipates an increase in households seeking EECCP services. To support EECCPs with the continued provision of services to the essential workforce, EEC sets forth this policy to guide the prioritization of families seeking new and continued access to EECCP services.

Criteria for Families to be Eligible to Use EECCP Services

EECCPs should remind all families of the Governor’s Safer At Home Advisory, and that EECCP services are only to be used as a last resort when all other child care options have been exhausted. To support these health directives, families are eligible for EECCP services, subject to program capacity and only if **BOTH** of the following apply:

- A parent works as an essential worker or in an industry identified in Phase 1 of the Reopening Plan. NOTE: If the family includes a two-parent household, both parents/caregivers must either be essential workers or returning to work as part of the Phase 1 Reopening Plan, or the second parent must be unable to provide care for the child; **AND**
- The parent has no safe alternative options for child care during the time a child is attending the group care setting. Emergency child care is not intended to be prioritized for families working from home at this time.

Prioritization of Eligible Families

EECCPs operating on or after May 18th must prioritize families who have no other safe alternatives to group care in the following manner:

- **EECCP Utilization Priority 1:** Priority access to emergency child care must 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. While all adults in the household are not required to be essential workers, emergency care must be used only when all other non-group care options have been exhausted. In addition to COVID-19 Essential Services, EECCPs will prioritize attendance to vulnerable children and families, such as homeless families and children involved with DCF and referred from a DCF social worker. Families with active DCF cases should contact their caseworker or other DCF contact to identify appropriate supports throughout the State of Emergency. Parents should be encouraged to utilize a consistent provider throughout the closure, if possible.
- **EECCP Utilization Priority 2:** Children from families in which at least one caretaker in the household are returning to work outside of the home, in industries identified in Phase 1 of the MA Reopening Plan, including families that were enrolled in the licensed child care program prior to the COVID-19 State of Emergency.
- **EECCP Utilization Priority 3:** Children of essential workers working from home.

Important Considerations for EECCPs:

- All essential workers and vulnerable families currently utilizing emergency child care must be given the option to stay in care at their current EECCP location and retain their access to child care before any new families are accepted.
- Children who were previously enrolled in the licensed child care program and seeking acceptance into the same provider’s EECCP because all adults in the household are returning to work outside the home in industries identified in Phase 1 of the MA Reopening Plan may be accepted into the program only in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this policy and provided that the returning child’s attendance does not displace a child that is prioritized for emergency child care.

EEC recognizes that each community’s needs will be different. EECCPs are encouraged to use their best judgement in making prioritization decisions that are in line with this policy and their community’s needs. EEC Regional Offices should be consulted when any questions arise.